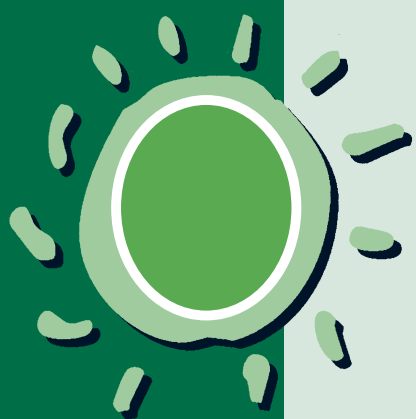


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**Lesson planning right
from the heart**

Duncan Foord

International collaboration

David Dry and Anastasia Reva

**What do our learners
really want?**

Richard Ostick

Strategies from the stage

John Anderson



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Editorial

Why do people learn English? What do learners really want? How can learning a language help you to understand the mindset of those who speak it as their native language? How can barriers and cultural stereotypes be broken down by language learning?

All these are questions addressed by contributors to this issue of ETP.

In an impressive cross-cultural project, David Dry and Anastasia Reva brought Russian and American history students together and encouraged them to air and discuss their preconceptions of each other's countries. Keeping their nerve when things got sticky and some deep-seated stereotypes were unearthed, the two teachers succeeded in getting their classes to work together via a wiki, to build up personal relationships and to gain a greater understanding of each other's history, culture and values.

David and Anastasia also insist on the need for meticulous planning in an international project such as theirs, while Duncan Foord takes a detailed look at a more specific kind of planning – a lesson plan – and advocates mapping out a flexible approach, rather than setting one out in a linear fashion.

The issue of getting to know not only what it means to be a speaker of a language, but what it means to be a citizen of a country where that language is spoken, is discussed by John Davis. He recommends using the American citizenship test as a basis for exploring what certain important words and

concepts really mean to an American. As he points out, this strategy could be used for any language and any country to promote greater understanding between peoples, and it would be especially useful for those seeking to live and work in another country.

Simon Andrewes looks at written communication in English between non-native speakers and concludes that the actual communication, the achievement of mutual understanding, is the crucial thing – not the sophistication or elegance of the style in which the message is couched. He also makes the point that a degree of accommodation is required to oil the wheels of communication: people need to monitor what they say and write, keeping in mind the needs and abilities of the person they are speaking or writing to.

Learners' needs are at the forefront of Richard Ostick's thinking, as he investigates, by means of a questionnaire, what it is that his learners want from a language course and what they consider to be the important elements and procedures.



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Lesson planning right from the heart

Duncan Foord
recommends strategies for preparing and teaching effective lessons.

Have you ever taught or observed a lesson which doesn't reach its end? Why do we run out of time, and what are the consequences? Not doing everything you've planned is not necessarily a bad thing, but in my experience the bits planned for the end are nearly always the most crucial bits of the lesson, where the students get to *use* language: the heart of the lesson.

In this article, I suggest that a global, rather than linear, approach to conceiving lessons and lesson plans can be helpful to teachers, by allowing more flexibility in staging (sequencing activities) and more focus on our communicative aims. To avoid missing out these vital parts of the lesson, rather than work *towards* our aims it might be more helpful to work *around* them.

Two approaches

To illustrate what I have in mind, I have produced two lesson plans for the same lesson. These are shown on page 5. The first of these takes a traditional linear format, with numbered stages designed to be followed in sequence. The second is in the form of a 'spider graph' or

'mind map', centring round a 'heart'. The communicative aim of the lesson is at the heart, and the various activities which might support the learners in achieving this aim are shown as satellites and arteries which feed and pump life into the heart. Forgive the mixed metaphors, but you get the idea.

The mind map is numbered, but it is fairly clear which bits can be left out and which bits depend on other bits and are, therefore, more distant from the heart. For example, the drill activity (2) is dependent on examples to drill (1). Of course, both can be left out altogether. We could start the lesson at 3 or 5 or even 7. This kind of flexibility is more difficult to envisage when we conceive of a lesson as a step-by-step linear procedure.

Conceiving the lesson in terms of a mind map, rather than a series of numbered and sequenced events, can be helpful for several reasons.

Five reasons

1 Right-brain dominant and visual teachers will immediately identify with information presented in this form more easily (for more on this, see Mark Fletcher's book *Teaching for Success*). In my experience, about half of the teachers I put the idea to are immediately enthusiastic and the other half are sceptical. Below are some reasons to persuade the other half to give it a try.

2 The importance of the communication activity is emphasised. It is the heart of the lesson, so it must be there or the lesson dies. This should be reflected in the plan. In linear sequences, it appears as just one among a series of activities which seem to be of equal importance. Looking at the example mind map plan shown on page 5, it is clear that the students can 'give each other advice about problems' without having worked on 'formulae for giving advice' or 'reading a text from a problem page'. In other words, the 'satellites' are peripheral and can be easily left out of the lesson.

I think it is possible to have a heart which isn't a 'communicative' activity (see FAQ 1 below), but most lessons seem to work best when it is. Of course, the heart could be a receptive activity, such as understanding an extract from a film or a newspaper article.

Two lesson plan formats

1 Linear format (left brain)

- 1 The teacher tells the students about a problem and elicits advice.
- 2 The teacher drills the students from the advice elicited and put up on the board. The focus is on typical formulae for giving advice and using appropriate rhythm and intonation.
- 3 The students write down six problems that they have.
- 4 In a peer drill, the students read and respond to each other's problems with a single phrase.
- 5 The teacher pre-teaches vocabulary from problem-page texts.
- 6 The students each read their own text and prepare to explain it to others.
- 7 The students mingle and give each other advice about their problems.
- 8 Correction slot. The teacher writes some language errors and successes on the board for the students to review, correct, drill, etc.
- 9 Plenary feedback. The students explain who gave the best advice.

2 Mind map format (right brain)



Lesson planning right from the heart



3 If we believe that students learn better through a communicative approach, then it is probably a good idea to be conceiving 'communicative lesson plans', in other words, plans which not only foreground communication activities, but also, in their very form, embody and reflect the task-feedback-task cycle which is inherent to the communicative approach. The linear format invites a dogged adherence to the sequence planned, as if leaving something out would somehow break a chain and we'd have to start again. This type of thinking, derived I believe from behaviourist models of language learning, is not always helpful and doesn't really reflect our understanding of the way people learn languages.

4 It facilitates flexibility. The mind map lesson plan/mindset allows the teacher more freedom to add and discard activities in response to time constraints and learner needs. The satellites can be numbered to suggest a sequence, but this sequence is not set in stone and can be easily abandoned.

5 It encourages learner involvement. If the lesson plan is presented to learners in this format on the board at the start of the lesson, they have an opportunity to add bits, take bits away, even change the heart and start again, if they want. Alternatively, the teacher can start with a heart and let the learners suggest the 'satellites'. This can be taken a stage further so that the learners decide both the hearts and the satellites – a kind of 'course planning from the heart'.

Four questions

Here are my answers to four FAQs (frequently asked questions) about this model of lesson planning.

1 Does this model only work for lessons based around communication activities?

No. I can imagine a lesson, say, with a class preparing for a First Certificate exam, where the teacher wants the learners to work on their accurate use of prepositions. The heart in this case could be 'the students fill in a gapped text with prepositions removed', and the satellites could include 'work on typical uses of certain prepositions with reference to a grammar book' or 'teacher chalk and talk' or 'learners researching and peer teaching', 'sentence gap fills', 'reading and noticing', 'a game of preposition dominoes', etc.

2 This model seems to be relevant for task-based learning, but what if you are working with other approaches?

Before task-based learning, communicative teaching was frequently expressed through the PPP type lesson. This type of lesson, which is still commonly used in initial training courses for teachers, usually contains a task, the third P: 'Production' or 'Free Practice'. The difference is that it always comes at the end, as if it is only possible to produce or activate language once the students have earned it by jumping through the first two hoops: 'Presentation' and 'Practice'. In this sense, PPP is a half-way house to communicative teaching, embracing the idea of a communication activity as a vehicle for learning, but retaining much of the audio-lingual insistence on sequencing and 'getting it right' before moving on. So, yes, this approach to planning reflects a broadly task-based approach to teaching language.

3 What about beginner learners? Surely they need some carefully-sequenced input before they can attempt even basic communication tasks?

Yes, I agree. How can students play bingo, for example, if they don't have a grasp of numbers in English? You could have two hearts! Or, better still, combine them in one: 'Learn the numbers 1 to 50 well enough to play bingo'. If you set out with this in mind, you will be less likely to be overly diverted by satellites like 'practise word stress *thirteen* versus *thirty*', which may be *helpful* but are not essential. It is better for the students to play bingo with poor word stress at the end of the class than to practise word stress but not have time to play the game!

4 What about 'staging'? Isn't it important to create lessons for learners which are carefully sequenced to support learning?

I think some sequences make more sense than others, but I suspect that learners are also capable of learning in a more messy fashion. This is, after all, how they acquire their first language, making sense of fairly random input rather than being taken through language step-by-step. We need plans that can go with the flow without abandoning core objectives. Our example lesson could start with stages 5 and 6, for example, or even 7. One tip for ensuring the communicative activity is not squeezed out of the lesson is to set a time for it to begin. For example, in a lesson from 6 pm to 7 pm, designate a latest time for the activity to start – say 6.40 pm. At 6.40, stop whatever you are doing with the students and start this activity. This way you preserve the heart of the lesson.



Observing teachers over a number of years on the Trinity Diploma in TESOL course at OxfordTEFL, our tutor team have noticed that the approach described here supports many teachers on the course in improving the balance and effectiveness of their lessons. They make a shift from left-brain listing towards right-brain mapping, conceiving lessons in terms of a core focus activity, a heart, which they work *around*. This helps them to make better choices before and during the lesson about which activities to include, discard or shorten, and helps the students see more clearly the practical application of the exercises and activities they are asked to do. 

Fletcher, M *Teaching for Success English*
Experience 2000



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communication made easy

The miller's tale

Jane Neill drives home the need to marry fluency and accuracy to communicate well.

Recently, a group of us were making analogies between teaching and learning and various everyday activities. We had run through baking and sports and moved on to learning to drive. Teaching students to manipulate the tense system was happily equated with changing gears, though someone also suggested that gear-changing was analogous with register: choosing the right gear for the right speed. I particularly enjoyed the comments made about an emergency stop. If your language students have a terrible time with a production activity, slam on the brakes and return to concept checking and analysis of form!

The conversation ended with this question: *Is learning to drive primarily about accuracy or fluency?* Most of my friends decided strongly in favour of accuracy, from the point of view of road safety, but I'm not so sure that the lines of demarcation are so clear. Isn't changing gear well an example of fluency rather than accuracy? Admittedly, each separate action must be executed in the right order and correctly (accuracy), but the series must be connected and performed at a reasonable pace (fluency). Is it possible to divide the two with such relentless finality?

Accuracy versus fluency

Many colleagues talk about the focus of their lessons being either on accuracy or on fluency. Newly-trained teachers will probably look at their lesson plans, decide what the students are practising at each stage and label it either accuracy or fluency.

But are we really so dogmatic? There are many activities where the students are practising both quite happily. Consider the drilling of linking sounds. Is it simply a focus on accuracy? Surely there is also an element of fluency, as we are trying to develop a native-speaker rhythm and reasonable speaking speed.

Accuracy and fluency

A milling activity, which is often a disguised drill – hence the term 'mill drill' – is a great way to encourage accuracy,

whilst at the same time allowing space for the students to be creative. The more confident students will often give longer answers to questions on cue cards and ask secondary questions from the outset. However, because of the repetitive nature of the task, those students who are less sure of themselves will gain in confidence and you will find that they, too, will go beyond what is on the card, spontaneously using agreement expressions such as *Me, too* and explaining their likes and dislikes to each other. Not only is this providing the students with the time and space to become more confident and creative in their use of language, but it is also giving them opportunities for communication which will build class cohesion.

We are all curious, and in order to foster a good learning environment, our students need to know something about each other. A milling activity provides some privacy for them to speak without obvious teacher attention. Moreover, the simple fact of just walking around imbues the task with a sense of informality, which in turn engenders confidence and risk-taking. The better we get to know each other, the more we trust each other. The essential element to any successful teaching and learning exchange is that the students feel safe. They need to trust you as the professional and each other, so that they will not be afraid to try out new language.

Another practical aspect of milling is that it varies the pace of the lesson and, when things are flagging, it is very often a good idea to move people around.

It is, of course, a good idea to listen in as unobtrusively as possible and to collect examples for praise and anonymous correction at the end. Don't forget to ask for feedback and a selection of answers from different members of the class. Everyone wants to feel that there is a purpose for doing different tasks, and feedback affords that sense of value.

Going through the mill

Here are a few ideas I have used for setting up and performing a mill drill:

1 I give each person in the class a card with one question, which includes a new piece of vocabulary. In a recent lesson on shopping they asked each other:

- 1** *How often do you go to the supermarket?*
- 2** *How many jeweller's are in the town centre?*
- 3** *What can you buy at the greengrocer's?*

2 In a lesson on adverbs of frequency, I got the students to answer three questions about their own habits and then to ask everyone those questions, to see who had the same routine. For example:

- 1** *How often do you go to the gym?*
- 2** *How many times a year do you go to the dentist?*
- 3** *How often do you eat in a restaurant?*

3 After teaching the future perfect and continuous, I gave each student a card with one question and got them to ask each other about ten years from the present. For example:

- 1** *Will you still be living in the same place? Why / Why not?*
- 2** *Will you be using English in your work? Why / Why not?*
- 3** *Will you have changed your hairstyle? Why / Why not?*

4 For a lesson reviewing advice exponents, each student was given a card describing a person or a group of people and told to ask everyone in the room to recommend a pet for the individual or group on their card. For example:

- 1** *A 25-year-old couple with a five-year-old child living in a flat in Barcelona.*
- 2** *A retired couple about 65 years old living in a house in a village in Britain.*
- 3** *A family with three children (5, 8 and 14) living on a housing estate in Britain.*



I am quite sure that communication activities cannot be rigidly consigned to boxes in the accuracy/fluency debate. Take the 'kangaroo start' that results from a driver's poor gear change: is it down to a mistake in accuracy, or fluency? I believe it is a little bit of both. **ETP**



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Choosing a coursebook

Ana Lía Passarotto
examines the factors
involved in making the right
choice.

'Whether or not we have had a say in choosing them, most of us have at some point relied on coursebooks to do our thinking and planning for us.'

Ingrid Freebairn

A textbook is just a book: a tool of the trade, and just one among several that we use to help our students learn English. But as we all know, there are tools and tools, and this one in particular has been somewhat overshadowed by more modern ones, such as any of the technological innovations you care to think of.

Despite such a discouraging introduction, there must be something in books which makes us talk about them, keep on using them and periodically rack our brains as to their validity and usefulness. Let me acknowledge from the very beginning that I am a book lover, so my opinions are going to be biased.

All things to all people

When teachers structure their lessons around a certain coursebook, a number of basic requirements must be fulfilled, the essential one being that they must find the book attractive and must feel comfortable with the material it provides. The book must also present a plausible graded grammar syllabus, motivating cognitively challenging material, engaging tasks, recycling of language, sample tests and revision activities. Depending on the level, it may

also provide an answer key for self-correction. If possible, it should be reasonably priced.

However, these are also the days of such concepts as multiple intelligences and mixed-ability classes. Thus, the modern textbook is expected to make provision for different learning styles, a diversity of learning backgrounds and different learning rhythms and paces. Is all this too much to be asked of a single book? And we have not finished yet!

The coursebook should be appropriate to the teacher's learning context and in accordance with the students' general socio-cultural conceptions. (This is easier said than done in an age in which books are mass-produced for a global market.) The material included in the book is expected to provoke reflection on the language being learnt and on the way it is being learnt, as well as provide opportunities for reflection on values and attitudes.

Different things in different books

A visit to any bookshop will show the enormous number of coursebooks on offer. They can be built around a language syllabus, a grammar syllabus, a functional syllabus, a learner-involvement syllabus or a multi syllabus, incorporating combinations of different syllabuses ... the possibilities are seemingly endless. A multi-syllabus textbook will, therefore, offer a considerable variety of lesson designs and activity types. It will allow the students to participate actively

Choosing a coursebook



in choosing what language they want to learn, great importance will be given to the systematic teaching of vocabulary, dictionary use will be an integral part of the course; some reading and listening material will be deliberately pitched above the productive level of the group of learners, and pronunciation work will be built into the lessons. More often than not, each unit will be organised around a thematic area, for example 'Families'.

A multi-syllabus textbook will include a comprehensive grammar and vocabulary syllabus, incorporating systematic work on listening, speaking, reading and writing; it may do so on a task-based basis.

It is not uncommon for coursebooks to have core learning material accompanied by tasks and exercises aimed at different levels of ability

But what do the authors of the book mean by a *task*? The term is often used in the same way as *exercise* to refer to any language-learning activity – anything from gap-filling to poetry writing. However, in task-based teaching, *task* is taken to mean an oral or written activity in which the primary goal is to achieve a particular outcome or product. Such tasks may include interviews, storytelling, problem-solving activities and discussions, and so on. As the task is treated as an end in itself, rather than an opportunity to practise specific language, it should be intrinsically motivating and directly related to real life.

Different books for different people

How, then, can we approach the daunting challenge of choosing the right coursebook for *us*? There is an enormous variety of coursebooks to choose from, and although no single one

will ever include everything we need or want, the good news is that coursebook writers share a common desire to provide teachers and students with what they need and want, and each book will have *something* we like. Here are some factors to consider:

Longevity

As choosing a new book is a demanding, time-consuming activity, we are likely to want to use it for at least three years. Furthermore, this timescale will give the coursebook a chance to succeed: we need time to get used to working with it and to personalise the material to suit our needs.

Flexibility

Flexibility is another important requirement. The coursebook author will have chosen a framework and a format which reflects good practice and current methodological trends. However, the existence of a framework and a distinctive methodology should not prevent teachers in a wide variety of contexts from using the book as the basis of their content (*what* they teach) while taking a different approach in their own classroom (*how* they teach it). As Ingrid Freebairn puts it: '*Materials suit people, not just situations. Very different people can learn from the same coursebook, even if it is not "ideal".*'

Content

No coursebook can ever be content free, and whilst publishers are careful to avoid anything that might be incorrect or offensive, they cannot always predict what will interest students in different cultures and geographical areas. This is a bit risky: as we all know, modern media give everybody access to up-to-date material that cannot be incorporated in a coursebook – and which will certainly prove more interesting to the students. If the book itself does not propose consulting the internet to seek information, the teacher can always refer the students to it and afterwards have them share their findings in class. The contents of the book you decide to adopt must certainly be appropriate to the age of your students, and will vary according to the school curriculum or the type of exam you are preparing the students for.

Syllabus

As has already been mentioned, coursebooks are based on a language

syllabus. Within this syllabus, the content, topics, functions and sequence are often largely determined by such factors as the requirements of international examinations. This is neither intrinsically good or bad. It is just a reality to be taken into account. Experienced teachers can, and most likely will, skip or modify any material they do not feel comfortable with.

Differentiated tasks

Another key issue for coursebook writers and teachers is the problem of mixed-level classes. It is not uncommon for coursebooks to have core learning material accompanied by tasks and exercises aimed at different levels of ability, so that more advanced students can move on to subsequent exercises, while the weaker ones concentrate on the simpler activities. This arrangement eases the teacher's task of keeping a heterogeneous group working together, while at the same time helping individual students to progress at their own pace.

Multi-level tasks, where the students work on slightly different versions of the same task, help keep the class working in unison but at different levels of difficulty. There are two basic types of multi-level task: tiered activities and bias activities.

Tiered activities produce very similar results for all the students involved, thus allowing for class feedback. Weaker students work at easier tasks, while stronger ones work at the more complex activities.

Bias activities obtain complementary results for student pairs, leading to student-student feedback. In this way, the stronger students help the weaker ones.

Recycling

It is widely recognised that learning does not happen in a linear fashion: it resembles a spiral watch-spring rather than a straight line. Recycling new material and presenting it to the learners again in different contexts is an important aspect of language teaching. Good coursebooks provide the students with as many opportunities as possible to encounter new language, and these opportunities are spaced at regular intervals, allowing cyclical reinforcement of learning.

Support for teachers

Well-chosen course materials encompass almost everything a teacher needs: texts,

songs, pictures, CDs and... yes, the Teacher's Book! Experienced teachers may not need one, but a Teacher's Book can be invaluable to inexperienced educators. If you decide that you will use one, remember that it should offer an explanation of the principles, objectives and rationale behind the course. Clear guidelines as to how the course materials can be used are also a must.



Almost all of us will end up working with a coursebook at some point in our careers. For a book or any other tool to work well, we must feel comfortable using it. So choose a book you feel attracted to, a book you believe you will be happy to use. If you find it attractive, your students will probably find it attractive, too. Your feelings about the

book – whether you enjoy it or it bores you stiff – will inevitably be reflected in your teaching.

You might want to choose a coursebook written by an author you respect and admire. This will help you deal respectfully with the material, and this attitude will also show in the way you use the book.

Remember that you don't have to follow the coursebook slavishly and uncritically. 'Adapt, don't adopt' as my methodology teacher used to say. You are the person best placed to discover your students' needs and devise the best way to cater for them. And it is this ability to detect individual needs that enables you, as a teacher, to analyse any coursebook critically, to take from it whatever your learners need and to supplement it with extra material if necessary.

When choosing a book, trust your own good judgement, knowledge, teaching abilities and inner feelings – and put all of them into action. Good luck! **ETp**

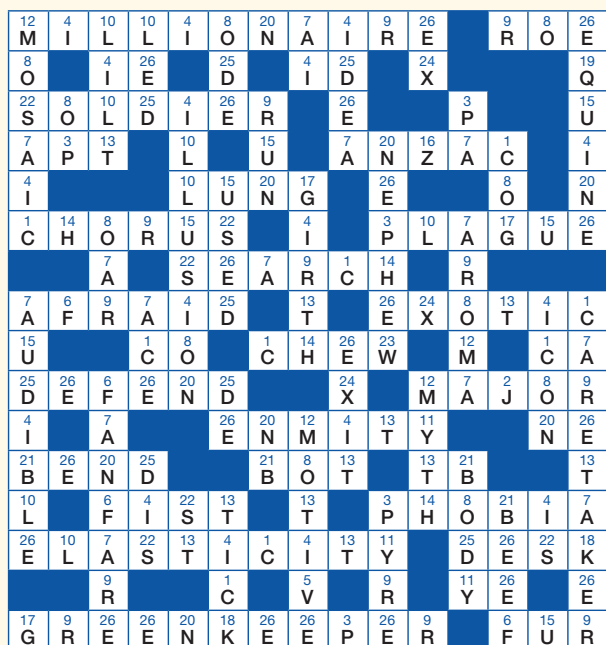
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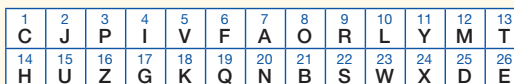
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COMPETITION RESULTS



Congratulations to all those readers who successfully completed our Prize Crossword 63. The winners, who will each receive a copy of either the *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary* or *Macmillan Phrasal Verbs Plus* are:

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ENGLISH TEACHING professional

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C is for creativity

Jane Arnold and Rod Bolitho discuss what creativity means to them.

This is an extended article on 'creativity for change', which was started by Brian Tomlinson in Issue 92. The article has been written by a group of language educators who are all part of *The 'C' Group: Creativity for Change in Language Education*, whose aim is to facilitate creative change in language teaching. Each author wrote a part and then passed the article on to the next author, and so on until the article was complete. In this issue, we hear from Jane Arnold and Rod Bolitho.

Creativity: learner, teacher, materials

Jane Arnold

Jane is walking down the street in Seville, Spain, where she lives and teaches. Suddenly, someone with a tape recorder stops her and says that her definition of creativity is urgently needed. She starts to turn away, but then decides to cooperate, no questions asked. She thinks for a moment and says:

'Creativity is the movement from what I already know to what I can imagine, from where I am to where I can go. It happens when I am free to pass from the familiar routines to the unknown. I am not trapped in the old, but can take from it what is useful and open my eyes, my mind and my heart to a new vision of what is possible. Creativity takes us from repeating to doing, from reacting to acting. When we are creative, we are not living and working automatically but, rather, our energy is directed and has a productive purpose. When we create, we are in a sense created, we are more.'

The person with the tape recorder nods and interrupts Jane to say that this is fine, but could she please relate this to language education. She agrees to try.

Creativity and the language learner

We know – from experience and from research – that in a classroom, what is taught is not necessarily the same as what is learnt, and that motivated learners are better learners. It is an accepted

principle that learning is more effective in an environment that is emotionally positive, and a very positive emotion in the learner is produced through creativity. The feeling of being engaged and enjoying the learning experience which appears when creativity is involved motivates intrinsically and opens the learner to be better able to absorb the language.

This was seen very clearly in a small-scale project in Spain reported by A Guerrero, where the teacher taught one English lesson 'according to the book' (doing the same routine activities in the textbook as usual), and then in the next lesson she used only special activities which connected closely to her learners' lives and which let them work together in groups in a creative way. After each lesson, the students were asked to fill in a short questionnaire. While statistics don't always tell the whole story, here they were very revealing. The percentage of learners agreeing with the following statements on the first day and the second day are as shown:

<i>I liked today's activities.</i>	36%	100%
<i>I was able to express my ideas.</i>	4%	82%
<i>Today's activities woke up my curiosity.</i>	18%	67%
<i>I would like to do more of these activities.</i>	18%	96%

In response to one of the open questions which asked them to describe each session, many described the first as boring, while nearly all saw the second class as fun, interesting, dynamic and a good way to learn. One student said it was a really big change – for the better. One important factor to be taken into consideration is that when students work creatively, this is likely to lead them to generate more opportunities for learning.

Creativity and the language teacher

The teacher plays an essential role in establishing the conditions in the classroom space for creativity to develop. As Earl Stevick said: *'we should judge creativity in the classroom by what the*

teacher makes it possible for the student to do, not just by what the teacher does.' There is a virtuous circle here, obviously. A teacher develops activities that let the students be creative, and the satisfaction this produces in both stimulates the teacher to continue in the creative spiral. Creating one's own materials at times, instead of only using the textbook, can allow teachers to experience a wide range of positive emotions, such as pleasure, fulfilment and gratification, which can reinforce their vocation. The 'taste' of my class is not the same when we do a textbook activity, no matter how good it is, as when my students do and enjoy an activity I have created. There exists then a significant personal connection with the activity.

There is no doubt that students appreciate teachers who are imaginative and who show concern for their students by finding ways to make the learning process more interesting. This sends a powerful message to the students. We need, however, to take into account that to be truly connected to creativity in teaching involves more than some fun and games on a Friday afternoon once in a while. It is not a case of a few new activities now and then, but of a new vision of what we want to do and can do in the classroom, and a continued effort to make the vision a reality.

Creative materials

Teaching materials, whether published or teacher-prepared, exist on a scale of less to more creative. If we explore what puts them on the more creative end of the scale, we might find things like: they engage the learners' attention on deeper levels, which will tend to lead to more permanent learning. This is, of course, something that is very important, but the process of how to achieve it will have no fixed rules. We are talking about creativity which generally involves thinking outside the box, and each person exploring in their particular context innovative ways to make the students' learning personally meaningful, as well as both fun and productive. In other words, to get it out of the rut and into the creative stream.

Conceptualising creativity

Rod Bolitho

For me, creativity remains an elusive term when seen within the context of education in general and language education in particular. As soon as I try to define it in terms which are worth passing on, I find I don't have the means to do it, so why bother? We 'linguists' seem to have a relentless need to define terms, as if, by doing so, we establish some kind of control or ownership over a concept. It sometimes feels as though our over-exercised, analytically-oriented left brains are struggling for dominance over our right brains. Nonetheless, I have found two sources helpful when thinking about creativity, and both of them are essentially open-ended accounts of what it might be about.

Take 1

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, without attempting a definition, writes:

'We share 98% of our genetic make-up with chimpanzees. What makes us different – our language, values, artistic expression, scientific understanding and technology – is the result of individual ingenuity that was recognised, rewarded and transmitted through learning. Without creativity, it would be difficult to distinguish humans from apes.'

Here, while I jib a little at his reference to 'transmitted through learning', I am reminded of the poverty of educational experience that many learners are exposed to in formal educational settings, the straitjacket imposed on them and their teachers by timetables, curricula, examinations and textbooks, all of which sometimes seem to militate against any hope of working intuitively and creatively. At the same time, I am certain that language education is a potential channel into the 2% that identifies our humanity and that, for whatever reason, this channel gets blocked and remains underused in many contexts, especially in post-primary education.

Csikszentmihalyi goes on to assert that *'the second reason creativity is so fascinating is that when we are involved in it, we feel that we are living more fully than in the rest of life'*.

The opportunity is there, then, in educational terms, to offer learners experiences that lead to this kind of feeling of fulfilment, but how many teachers are able to open this up for their learners, and do the learners always really want them to?

I remember during my secondary school days being irritated by one particular teacher's attempts to push me into some kind of creative activity, as they inevitably required me to abandon my comfort zone and to take risks of one sort or another. And much later, as a teacher and teacher educator, I have had to recognise and live with the part that routines and predictability play in any teaching and learning process. If the spark of fulfilment which Csikszentmihalyi alludes to is not to become devalued, perhaps creativity needs to be associated with stand-out 'moments', with times when intuition and spontaneity take over from planning and routines. Put another way, teachers and learners neither want nor are able to be creative in every lesson of every day. All the more important, then, to help language teachers to identify the potential outlets for creativity that exist in their professional lives, and to help them escape, when they need to, from the fetters that tie them to sameness and repetitiveness from one day to the next. I believe that these outlets are many, as Brian Tomlinson has illustrated with his examples in ETp Issue 92, and only if teachers are prepared to tap into creative potential in their minds will they find creative options that suit them and their learners. There are no recipes here, and teacher educators need to tread carefully if they are to avoid alienating or even intimidating teachers with well-meant demonstrations of creativity in action. There are plenty of people in language teaching who make a living by trading in conformity. They can be found among textbook writers, examination boards, syllabus designers, trainers ... to name just a few. Over many years now, I have seen evidence that conformists in our field feel threatened by attempts to humanise language teaching by proposing more creative ways of being and of acting, resulting in the kind of primitive backlash that condemns drama in the classroom, for example, as 'touchy-feely' or liberal and 'wishy-washy'.

Take 2

The second 'take' on creativity that I find useful comes from the work of Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl on a revision of Benjamin Bloom's oft-cited *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. The main purpose of the work on this taxonomy was to gain working understandings of cognition and the development of thinking skills. In the revision, 'Creating' replaces 'Synthesising' and assumes the final (highest order) place in the list of six

thinking skills. Writing about this in a subsequent article, Krathwohl describes 'Creating' as *'putting elements together to form a novel, coherent whole or make an original product'*. The reference to 'novel' and 'original' here chimes neatly with Csikszentmihalyi's assertion that *'creativity leaves an outcome that adds to the richness and complexity of the future'*. That will do for me as a way forward in language education. 'Moments' in our language classes or teacher education courses when learners or teacher participants are able to 'produce' something original or novel in ways which are facilitated but not in any way imposed by the teacher or teacher educator – this is a version of creativity that I can espouse and feel at home with. **ETp**

This article will continue in Issue 94 of ETp, with contributions from Rod Ellis, Peter Lutzker and Alan Maley.

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As if!

Paul Bress argues that creative language can transform creative writing.

Most students learn English for a particular purpose – to be able to study in English, to be able to work using English, or for travel. Some students, however, would prefer to use English for more aesthetic purposes: they want to write creatively. In order to do this, they have to conjure up not only a narrative, but also a number of images which will drive that narrative forwards. This will involve more than just the use of adverbs (such as *effortlessly*, *meticulously* or *inexorably*) – it will involve using words to convey mental pictures (such as *digging oneself into a hole*, *swimming against the tide* and *having a lump in one's throat*). Some figures of speech and idioms are so well-worn as to be little more than clichés, but others can not only make writers feel that their texts are coming alive, but also transform the act of reading a text.

How can teachers unlock their students' imaginations and help them to use language creatively in their writing? Let's look at six ways of using similes.

1 Encourage the students to understand the effect that similes can have on the reader.

This is the awareness-raising part. If someone can't see any point in using similes, they probably won't use them. We usually write texts that others will read, and we want to make an impression on these readers. Therefore, students need to have some idea of how a simile can affect their readers.

You could ask your class which of these sentences they find more vivid.

- a) *She angrily kicked the image of her husband out of her mind.*
- b) *She angrily kicked the image of her husband out of her mind as if it were a yapping dog.*

They might not like b), but most students will say that it has greater impact on them than a).

2 Show the students models and examples.

Once the students have an idea of the

effect similes can have, they will need to know what the constituents of a simile are. You can give them examples like these:

- *He held onto the lamp post as a drowning man clings to a log.*
- *He held onto the lamp post like a drowning man clinging to a log.*

In a simile, two dissimilar things are compared with *as* or *like*.

3 Ask the students to think of their own mental images.

This is the part where your students need to reflect. All you can do is to give them a prompt, and then give them space to produce an image in their minds (which is different from the prompt). For example:

- *A ignores B, and B feels excluded. What image represents that sense of being excluded?*
- *C is thinking of finishing his relationship with D, but has mixed feelings about it. What image represents that sense of uncertainty?*

Of course, there are no correct answers here, and some students may fail to come up with any images at all. However, if they don't have this chance to conjure up an image, they certainly won't be able to write similes.

4 Ask the students to write their own similes.

You can now ask your students to 'translate' the images they've just conjured up into proper similes. For example: *When Sue ignored Bob, he felt as excluded as a vegetarian at a barbecue.*

5 Ask the students to write a whole paragraph which contains a simile.

The problem with similes is that they should appear only occasionally. Used willy nilly, they soon become an irritant. So it's a good idea to get your students to write a paragraph and use only one simile in it. You can provide paragraph topics, such as:

- *Julie and Jerry have just met and they get on incredibly well together.*

- *Peter ends his relationship with June angrily (he thinks she's wasting his time).*
- *Having been turned down by Laura, Jack goes back to Sheilah dejectedly.*

Note: it's a good idea to get the students to choose one paragraph only to write. And don't pressurise them – any such pressure is bound to have a negative effect on the creative process.

6 Give honest feedback on your students' similes.

By now you should have created the conditions for successful simile writing. However, that doesn't mean that the results will necessarily be good. You will be expected to give feedback on how well your students have incorporated similes into their creative writing. It's unlikely that they will make significant grammatical mistakes, as that aspect of simile writing isn't too difficult. Instead, the students are more likely to come up with similes that are grammatically accurate but which sound rather clichéd. Feedback should be honest, but not dispiriting.

So if one student writes '*The plan worked like a dream*', you could say that it's structurally sound, but it could be *extended* somehow (you could ask what *kind* of dream ...). If another student writes '*His cries sounded like those of a stricken wildebeest on the plains of the Serengeti*', you can simply give unequivocal praise for both imagination and grammar.



As English language teachers, we can stretch our students in many ways. We can insist on correct grammar, we can ask them to use more complex grammar, we can encourage them to sound slightly more like native speakers, etc. Another way that we can stretch our students is by encouraging them to imagine pictures, and then to use those pictures for similes in their creative writing. By doing this, we will be helping them not only to become more proficient in English but also to develop as writers. **ETP**



Paul Bress lives in Herne Bay, UK, where he teaches English to overseas students, writes novels and paints. His novels are: *The Man Who Didn't Age*, *The Dysfunctional Family*, *For Adults Only*, *The Check-out Operator* and *Life Swap*, all published by Fast-Print and available on Kindle. His paintings can be viewed at www.artfinder.com/paul-bress and <http://paulbressgallery.blogspot.co.uk>.

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What do our learners really want?

Richard Ostick does some research.

Teachers these days are inundated by an infinite choice of resources: news broadcasts, podcasts, videos, readymade lesson plans, articles on teacher development, video, etc. An easy error to make is to use this infinite wealth of 'stuff' as the starting point for planning our lessons. What we should be doing first is thinking about our learners and about what they really want and need.

When was the last time you asked your learners what they want to learn – and really listened to the answer? In my quest for greater learner satisfaction – and the hope that what I do will somehow enrich someone's learning, their path up the career ladder, dining out experience, love life or holiday – I decided to launch my own small action research project to find out what it is that my learners really want from an English language course.

I devised a questionnaire with 20 statements about learning. During the next six months, I asked a number of learners at my school, all professional adults, to mark each statement on a scale of 1–6 (1 = *I totally disagree* and 6 = *I totally agree*) and to add any comments they might have.

The learners represented a range of different nationalities and ages, as I was

interested in how these factors might affect their attitudes towards learning. I also asked individuals at different stages of their course, in order to get a more balanced result.

All the learners were attending courses at my school, so you might assume that they had already made choices about where to study, based on their attitudes towards learning. As a result, you may conclude that the results will be biased in some way, as I didn't ask learners from a range of different institutions and contexts.

*When was the last time
you asked your learners
what they want to learn
– and really listened
to the answer?*

However, I have found that learners are actually unlikely to choose a course based on their values and attitudes towards learning. Other factors are considered well before these, such as the location, class size, average age of the students, price, length of course and needs. So the subjects of my study were,

I feel, not pre-disposed to a particular outcome.

In this article I will give my own comments on each statement, show you the results of the survey, and add a commentary to each one. At the end, I will draw some conclusions on what this means for our language courses.

1: Grammar is the most important thing for me.

What do you think *your* learners would say? I believe that there is often too much focus on grammar. It is often put on a pedestal by learners (and teachers) and focused on to the detriment of other language areas. I don't think grammar should be ignored, but I do feel the priority should be lowered.

Result: 3.25

Grammar is still clearly a priority for some, but it is also clear that others are realising that it is not the be-all-and-end-all of learning a language. Perhaps there is a slight shift towards focusing on *successful* language, rather than formally *accurate* language. This is especially relevant today, as most English is spoken between non-native speakers. They make mistakes all the time, yet still manage to communicate effectively.

What do our learners really want?



2: Focusing on grammar will help me communicate more effectively.

There was a range of differing opinions and this often depended on the nationality of the individual. There were several scores of 5 and 6 from Swiss and Russian participants and several scores of 1 and 2 from Brazilians. Perhaps this is a reflection of the different cultural/educational backgrounds of these learners and how studying language structure fits in with their learning strategies.

Result: 3.65

The wide range of responses meant that the overall result was again near the middle. It is clear that for many learners grammar is an important and integral part of their values and attitudes towards learning a language. Such firmly established beliefs must be handled cautiously in the classroom in order to maintain trust and credibility. You cannot tell learners that grammar is not important, when they clearly believe that it is!

3: Pronunciation is the most important thing for me.

I think the importance of pronunciation was nicely summed up by Jonathan Marks in Issue 81 of ETp: *'... pronunciation is such an important factor in confidence – or lack of confidence – in speaking a language.'* In my school, we have a strong focus on pronunciation, with sessions dedicated to it built into the weekly timetable and covering things like problem sounds, word stress, sentence stress and connected speech. These are very popular with the learners. All the teachers use the phonemic chart, which is introduced to new students every Monday in an extra lesson after school. This lesson is done in a fun, energetic and light-hearted way. In previous institutions where I have worked, pronunciation has been largely ignored and this is often the case in coursebooks.

I personally believe that every lesson should be a pronunciation lesson. Next time you set up a speaking activity in pairs, monitor when there is a breakdown in communication. It is highly likely that this will be due to a pronunciation issue.

Result: 5

The result here shows clearly that learners feel pronunciation is extremely important to their language learning experience.

4: Vocabulary is more important than grammar.

We saw from Statement 1 that grammar is still regarded by many as a priority, but how would its importance fare when juxtaposed with vocabulary?

I have always agreed with David Wilkins: *'... without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.'*

Result: 5

As it turns out, many of the learners would also agree with the quotation above. If this is the case, why are most coursebooks still organised around a grammatical syllabus? Why are teachers still so concerned with accuracy?

5: I enjoy learning grammar.

I appreciate that all learners learn in different ways. I know that some like analysing language, but do we really have to know how the engine works in order to drive a car successfully? For many, this is not necessary; for others, it may actually make them more proficient drivers.

I feel one of the most important things in the grammar classroom is to take the pressure off the learners. When teaching the third conditional, I tell my learners that I don't expect them to use it naturally and accurately in conversation by tomorrow, but what I do hope is that after this lesson and ten more like it, and through continued exposure to natural accurate language, they will be using it without thinking six months, one year or two years in the future.

Result: 4

So, it is true – the majority of students do enjoy learning grammar.

6: When doing self-study, it is more interesting for me to learn new words than do grammar exercises.

If you have ever attempted to learn a new language, what would you say? For me, learning new words/phrases gives instant gratification – they are something I can learn, take away and use.

Result: 4

The result shows that the majority of learners asked agree with me.

7: The best way of recording new vocabulary is with a translation.

I wanted the learners to think about their study skills – something often overlooked on adult courses. Teachers often assume adult learners have already adopted useful skills from their earlier education. The truth is that it may have been a long time since these learners were in a learning environment.

I encourage my learners to use a monolingual dictionary (whether a book, online, on a CD-Rom or an app). An English–English dictionary gives you the information you need to really learn a word (pronunciation, other meanings, examples, part of speech, etc); a translation dictionary does not.

Result: 2.45

A minority of students still rely on translations, but most realise the importance of knowing more than this.

8: I want to learn as many new words and phrases as possible.

My initial thoughts were that this would be central to everyone's goals on any language course.

Result: 5.4

Although this appears to be an overwhelming result, my feeling is that although the learners know that improving their vocabulary is key to improving their communicative competence, there is also an inner voice telling them that grammar is still vital.

9: We should learn all new grammatical structures in order.

Language is often presented in this way in coursebooks, and learners are often keen to see learning in a structured linear form. So I was actually surprised with the result.

Result: 2.85

The result was fairly strong disagreement. A quote from Gabriele, a Russian student, perhaps explains why: *'... if we learn things in this way in class, then some students will get bored because we all know different structures ... it would be better for the teacher to find out what we don't understand and focus on this.'*

10: We should not start a new grammar structure before we know the easier ones.

As teachers, we think that learners often like to approach learning in a structured and linear way, but we know it doesn't

always work like this in practice. Take the third person *s*, something that is presented to learners often within the first few pages of a beginner-level coursebook. Why is it many learners still have not mastered this simple structure by the time they get to upper-intermediate level?

Result: 3.35

We assume this is the way learners want to learn things, and this is the way language is presented in many respected teaching materials. However, this study shows that this is not the case. Refer back to the quote from Gabriele; I think it is simply a question of attending to student needs. Let's not teach our learners the next unit of the coursebook just because it is there!

11: I want my teacher to correct every mistake.

Teachers and learners often have different opinions on correction: not only on *when* to correct, but also on *how* to correct. Some learners think that the teacher should correct every mistake they make and we don't have the heart to tell them that if we did that, we would not get very far in the lessons! Some will break into a million pieces if an error is even hinted at; others will simply ignore our attempts to correct them and continue to ramble on!

Result: 3.35

The result reflects the wide range of attitudes learners have towards correction. As a teacher, I think we need to be sensitive to our students' attitudes but also make our own rationale clear, explaining how, why and when we are going to correct – if at all.

12: The most important thing for me is communication – understanding and being understood.

Surely, this would be central to any learner. I would be surprised if everyone did not put a 6 for this! I was not too far off the mark ...

Result: 5.4

On deeper analysis of this result, the lowest marks were put by participants from Switzerland, one of them saying: *'It is important to use correct structures and tenses.'* I thought this was another interesting reflection of the 'learning baggage' that many learners carry around with them. In general, I would say that this study suggests that in

Switzerland and Russia there seems to be a more grammatical approach to learning language.

13: Most of my communication is with non-native speakers.

This is something we hear more and more. If it is true, how should it affect the content of a language course? Should we be focusing on idioms and more native-speaker-type language? Should we bother looking at features of connected speech, such as elision, linking, weak forms, etc? Should we bother with things like third person *s*, articles and the present perfect? Our learners constantly make errors with these, but they seem to communicate quite successfully. Are units in the coursebook relating to British and American culture still relevant?

Result: 4.35

Given that there are estimated to be over 365 million users of English as a second language and over 750 million users of English as a foreign language, this result is not a surprise. However, may of us still hang on to a British/American model of English in our classrooms. Do we need to rethink how we approach the language we teach, especially as the language itself is being shaped and re-shaped by the millions of learners using it every day?

14: I am not worried about making mistakes when I speak.

My general feeling is that learners *are* worried about making mistakes when speaking. However much you tell them not to worry and just to try to keep the conversation moving, they don't like making mistakes – they are afraid it will make them look incompetent.

Bearing in mind what we said previously about the number of non-native speakers, do our learners really need to be that concerned about minor errors?

Result: 3

This result tells me that the majority of learners *are* still concerned about making errors when speaking.

15: I always try to understand every word when I am listening.

I have often thought that this is the key problem in the listening classroom: learners get lost and left behind because they try to internalise and comprehend every word.

Result: 3

The result was a surprise to me. One learner commented: *'I don't try to understand every word, I just try to understand as much as possible.'* I think this is a good listening strategy.

16: I can understand my classmates, my teachers and my host family, but can't understand the TV or people in the street.

I have heard this a lot, and I think by including this statement I had an underlying agenda. As most English is spoken between non-native speakers, the trend is to move away from a 'standard' native model. I wanted to make a case for dealing with the features of connected speech and teaching some well-known idioms. So, subconsciously, I wanted the learners to say *'Yes! That's it! That's my problem!'* But, they didn't ...

Result: 3.75

Despite this result being in the middle of the scale, it turns out that many of the learners couldn't understand their host family or their classmates – in some cases even their teacher! After looking more closely at the results, I found that the intermediate-level students largely put 5s and 6s for this ... so perhaps we can focus on connected speech and idioms from time to time.

17: I need to write a lot in English.

I think writing is probably the least favourite of the skills. Teachers find it hard to come up with exciting writing lessons and students don't want to spend time in class practising writing. But, do they need to?

Result: 3.65

Some learners need to write a lot and some don't. However, the common denominator here was emailing. Most of the learners said they have to write emails in English or will have to in future. Some reported this was not a problem, as they have time to write these and can always use translations to help them. I think this is part of the trouble with writing emails. If we translate things directly, we may make mistakes with the level of formality and friendliness/politeness. This is key when writing emails for business.

18: I want to know how to improve my listening, not just test it in class.

What do our learners really want?



As a teacher, I think it is always important to ask yourself whether you are teaching or testing. This is especially true with listening. Are you testing to see how much the learners understand, or are you designing tasks that focus on developing different listening skills? Are you showing them why different parts of the text are difficult to understand? Are you focusing on transferring skills they have in L1 to L2? This is what they want.

Result: 5

The majority of the results for this statement were 5 or 6. The lowest, from a Swiss student, was a 2. She commented that it is 'important to test our skills to know our level'. Maybe she is right!

19: I think using a coursebook on a short English course is a good idea.

I personally think using a coursebook within a system of continuous enrolment is problematic because the course is dictated by the coursebook rather than the learners' immediate needs.

Result: 2.45

The learners largely agreed with me on this.

20: I want to spend my time improving my English, not preparing for an exam.

Some might argue that the two things are the same, but this is not the case in my experience. If I am teaching a one-to-one learner for two weeks, we start off by doing an in-depth needs analysis on day one. Then we tackle the different areas of this needs analysis, perhaps looking at interaction in a business meeting, speaking on the telephone or dealing with questions during a presentation. At the end of the first week, the learner might decide that it would be a good idea to do an international exam at the end of the course. We would then spend the whole of the next week looking at exam techniques and put the needs analysis to one side. The second week would turn into preparation for the exam, not preparation for the rest of the learner's working career!

Result: 5

The result shows that the learners see that there *is* a difference between these two things and choose English courses accordingly.

Conclusions

Based on the information from this study, I have come up with some points for consideration regarding language courses.

- 1 We can't ignore grammar. It is regarded by many learners as important and ingrained in the key values they have about learning a language. However, we need to highlight the fact that focusing on grammar alone is not the best way to improve communication skills. Successful communication is dependent on other areas of language, particularly vocabulary and pronunciation.
- 2 Learners see pronunciation as crucial, so let's give it greater priority. Every lesson should involve elements of pronunciation. Introduce your learners to the phonemic chart – this is a great tool which allows them to see where their pronunciation issues lie, both in terms of production and recognition.
- 3 The more words our learners have in their mental lexicon, the more they can say and understand. Your learners need to walk out of every lesson with a number of new and useful words or phrases that they can use.
- 4 Some learners enjoy analysing language and seeing how it works. It is the teacher's responsibility to present grammar in a fun and interesting way, but certainly with less urgency and importance.
- 5 Teachers need to be aware of how culture and educational experiences can affect the learners' attitudes to learning. We need to treat this 'baggage' carefully, as some of these ideas are firmly entrenched in the learners' own values. Don't try to impose your own. If you want to introduce a different approach, it needs to be done gently and gradually.
- 6 I still feel that raising the learners' awareness of connected speech is an

important element to include on language courses. Although the aim is not to get them to speak using these features, it is something that might help them decode information when listening.

- 7 Exams seem to be becoming more and more important. However, even if we are teaching an exam preparation course, let's not forget that our learners have real-life and immediate needs, too.
- 8 Let's not stick rigidly to the coursebook, but teach our learners according to their needs. Use the coursebook as a resource, but don't follow it slavishly, page by page.
- 9 Be sensitive about correction. Tell your learners when, how and how much you are going to correct them – and tell them why you are going to do it this way.
- 10 Don't base learning on mastering one grammatical structure before moving on to the next, perhaps more complex one. Learning a language is not like building a wall, brick by brick. It is a much more organic process and needs to be approached in a more holistic way, based, above all, on learner needs.



The whole process of asking my learners about what they see as important to their own learning has taught me to listen. Working together to meet their needs will mean a successful learning experience and help us as teachers make the right choices about our language courses and what we do in the classroom. **ETP**

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Richard Ostick works as Academic Manager at Kingsway English Centre in Worcester, UK. He has taught in the UK and abroad for almost 18 years. He tries hard to keep his own CPD wheels turning by writing articles like this one, and also by forcing himself to stand up in front of people at conferences from time to time!

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Strategies from the stage

John Anderson describes the day he discovered that the dark matter of teaching is orange.

So the title is “Rover Doesn’t Like Snails”. I said from the stage, trying to set the audience up for my final comic poem, ‘What kind of an animal would you say was Rover?’

There were only a limited number of possible replies to this – dog, cat, maybe hedgehog if someone was being cute – and I had rehearsed reactions to all of them. I looked out at the sea of smiling faces, confident that I was in complete control and that nothing could go even slightly wrong. ‘A carrot!’ someone shouted out.

At the 2013 IATEFL conference in Liverpool, Adrian Underhill and Alan Maley continued their discussion on the *dark matter* of teaching: how to work with the unpredictable events that make up our lessons by being in a state of preparedness, rather than just being prepared. As I listened to them, I reflected on how 20 years as a semi-professional stand-up comedian had helped me in the classroom and how the lessons learnt seemed to feed quite naturally into the areas Adrian and Alan were exploring.

So what on earth could standing up on stage – often wearing ridiculous facial hair and a leopard-skin fez – have taught me, other than that sweat frequently dissolves moustache glue?

- Be confident about what is required of you. Does your institution expect you to get through five modules of the book this term? If so, why? Is there any room for negotiation? Is the management aware of the benefits of working together with the students, rather than just standing at the front directing traffic?

Arriving at a new comedy gig, it's important that I find out whether I only get paid if I do the full 20 minutes, whether I can end early if it goes spectacularly well/badly or whether they blacklist performers who over-run.

- Be open to seeing where interruptions take you. Whatever a student says, they usually know their own context better than you do, and have deemed their interruption relevant to that intersection between their world and that of your classroom. Very often, drawing them out

with questions or opening their comments out to the wider class will take you to places you couldn't or wouldn't have gone to on your own. And they're often very exciting places.

From the comedy perspective, hecklers can allow for a spontaneity in the comedian that is so much more genuine and free from artifice than anything the audience have seen up to that point that it generates enormous laughter.

- However, retain some curatorship of your classroom content. Interruptions, questions, comments and criticisms can help the class find the best path through the lesson for them – but not always. A learner with a hidden agenda or niche interest may well sidetrack things into unuseful territory – and here you have to steer things gently back on track. Have you decided just how far off-topic things can be allowed to go?

Hecklers at a comedy gig have been known to be drunk, dangerous or deluded and so may need putting firmly in their place ... using techniques I would not recommend for the classroom.

- Know your audience. The better you know the needs and interests of your class, the more you can deal with the unexpected in a beneficial way. José shouts out that he has a cat which closely resembles the man in the coursebook. This might normally be the cue for a quick laugh and getting back to the book, but you happen to know that many members of the class have pets, that José's outburst reflects a level of boredom at this moment, and that you covered *whose* last week. Cue a quick drawing and matching exercise that revitalises everyone and reviews useful content.

The British comedian Ken Dodd famously has a map that shows him what people are more likely to laugh at in different areas of the country, giving him the confidence to perform to the needs of his crowd.

- Have a variety of routines and activities into which you can fit different content when necessary. It's all very well suggesting you ‘go with the flow’ when your students take you in a different direction, but if you

don't have a bank of possible activities to fit language into or know how to work with spontaneous language, it may fall flat and you might never dare to venture from your lesson plan again. Watch how it works on *YouTube*, read practical magazines like this one, talk to people more experienced than you.

In comedy, the most basic example would be: ‘It's wonderful to be here in _____, but then I've just come from _____, so it's wonderful to be anywhere!’

- Have various end points in mind. What's the earliest in any lesson plan that you could wrap up the lesson and still have achieved something of what you set out to do? If you do finish before you've covered all your material, how will you round the lesson off? Thinking this through takes some of the stress away from dealing with the unexpected, and means the students are getting something that still feels like a coherent whole.

If I'm 18 minutes into a 20-minute routine and have only covered the first page of five pages of material – due, of course, to extended bouts of laughter and/or applause – I need to have thought about how I'm going to end on a high note.



I stood on that stage, the *carrot* comment still echoing in the air. To this, the natural, human approach seemed best:

‘A carrot?’ I said. A surreptitious check of the clock, a glance to the wings to confirm with my manager that a slightly early exit would be OK, and ... ‘Excuse me, barman, I'll have a pint of whatever he's been drinking!’ Enormous laughter, exit stage left. **ETP**



John Anderson is Adult Courses Manager at the British Council in Malaysia. He has previously worked as a teacher and teacher trainer in the UK, Hungary, Romania, Spain and Singapore and enjoys some success as a stand-up comedian under the unlikely, and not-as-funny-as-he-first-thought name of ‘Hartley Pool’.

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Sounds tricky

Robin Walker finds teaching pronunciation to teenagers challenging but rewarding.

When I was in a teenager in French classes, I used to dread being made to stand up and pronounce words in what seemed to me an impossible language. No matter what I did, I could only lose. If I pronounced badly, I'd be told off by my teacher. If I did it well, I'd be mocked by my friends later in the schoolyard.

Little has changed in the intervening years with respect to the conflicts that many teenagers suffer as they grow up, and this makes the teaching of pronunciation an especially delicate task. Handled poorly, it can easily become a no-go area. Teenagers are at that difficult age when they don't want to stand out from the crowd, and nothing can make them look more foolish in front of their peers than trying to pronounce a foreign language well.

Of course, some teenagers have a natural interest in pronunciation, often matched with an equally natural ability. But most don't, at least not in a school setting. However, even with these less willing learners, as teachers we can make a difference in a number of areas, key amongst which are:

- **Motivation**, without which little can be achieved.
- **Model**, where there is more than one option.
- **Method**, which is much more than 'Listen and repeat'.

Motivation

In her excellent review of the factors that

affect success in pronunciation learning, Joanne Kenworthy demonstrated that teachers can't change many of them. Age, phonetic ability and first language are what they are. It's no use lamenting the fact that your teenagers would be better at pronunciation if they were only four. They're not. They're 14. Why do one or two kids in every class just seem to pick pronunciation up? Answer: Because they have exceptional phonetic ability – the others are simply normal. Wouldn't it be great if everyone was learning English pronunciation from a first language like Dutch? It would, but most aren't.

So what can we change as teachers? Motivation and attitude, says Kenworthy. We can bring about a noticeable change in motivation in teenagers simply by showing them that we care about pronunciation. And let's face it, if *we* don't care about it, *they* won't either.

Kenworthy suggests three main strategies for increasing learners' motivation:

- First, by persuading them of the **importance of pronunciation**. This means bringing authentic pronunciation 'accidents' and anecdotes into the classroom. As a teacher, you can do this, but it's far more effective if the students themselves are encouraged to add their own experiences to a collection of examples of when pronunciation mattered.
- Second, by **setting realistic goals**. As we saw in ETp 91, intelligibility is a far more realistic goal than sounding like a native speaker. In addition, by

setting intelligibility as the goal for the class, the learners can still sound like themselves. Part of the problem with French for me, was that to do it well I had to sound like someone else. Doing that at a time like adolescence can be very threatening for teenagers.

- Lastly, by **demonstrating your concern** for your learners' pronunciation. Tactfully praising and rewarding their successes and their progress, or giving marks, are simple ways to reward good pronunciation. I'll return to marks at the end of this article.

*It doesn't matter
if you are not a native
speaker, as long as
you know that your
own pronunciation
is intelligible*

Model

In ETp 91, I explained how the model we choose depends upon the learner's goal. The recordings on a coursebook CD are the most common model. However, as the class teacher, your own pronunciation is an unavoidable and important model for your learners. And it doesn't matter if you are not a native speaker, as long as you know that your own pronunciation is intelligible when you use your English outside the classroom.

There are, in fact, advantages to teachers who share the first language of their students acting as models. Firstly, you represent an achievable goal for your students. If you started from the same place as them and now successfully use English in your travels, then your students can surely do the same thing.

Secondly, because you know how hard the pronunciation of English can be, through personal experience, you are appreciative of your students' efforts. Better still, because you have already made the journey of learning English pronunciation, you can pass on the techniques and tricks that you used to make your pronunciation as good as it is. A native-speaker teacher can't do this.

A third model, one that teenagers might find especially attractive, is a famous film star, singer or sports celebrity from the students' own country.

The idea here is that a) such people are already aspirational models for teenagers, b) they demonstrate on a daily basis that you can be intelligible and successful without having a native-speaker accent, and c) they share the same first language as your students and have overcome the pronunciation problems your learners are currently working on.

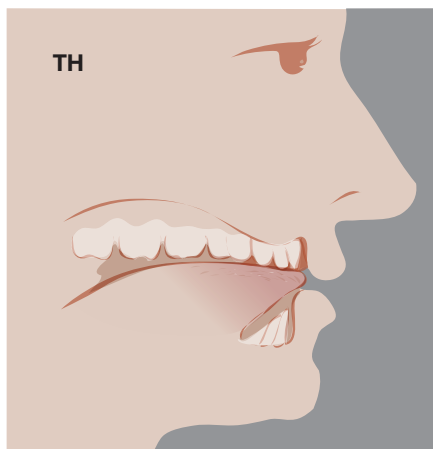
Using celebrities as models is not as difficult as it might sound. Begin by inviting each of your students to choose their own preferred star. Next, ask them to collect video clips of their celebrity speaking in English. Then, when you deal with a pronunciation point in class, ask your learners to look for examples of how their celebrity pronounces the problem point. It is interesting to ask volunteers to bring a video clip to class which has examples of the problem so that everyone can see and hear how the star deals with it.

Method

A lot has been published about the best ways to teach pronunciation, which can be found in manuals such as those at the end of this article. I like to group my strategies and techniques into pronunciation IDEAS.

I – Imitate. Don't make things harder than they are. Teenagers don't need to know everything that has been published about a particular pronunciation feature. They just need to be able to do it. If they can, congratulate them on their success and move on.

D – Demonstrate. The great thing about demonstrating pronunciation (and imitation, too) is that it doesn't need any technical language. To demonstrate /θ/, for example, we can show students a simple diagram of the tongue position, and then model the sound for the class.



If local culture allows you to, you can exaggerate the 'th' sound so that your students can see the position of your tongue and imitate you. Using your own face or simple diagrams, you can demonstrate quite a lot of sounds. Demonstrating the difference between /f/ and /p/, for example, is both quicker and more effective than explaining it. You can also demonstrate differences between vowel sounds. I often use demonstration to help learners to see the movement of the lips for /ɔ:/ as opposed to /əʊ/, for example.

Voicing can also be demonstrated to a class by getting them to alternate between /s/ and /z/ while they hold their thumb and first finger to their throats. Once they are aware of the difference between voiced and voiceless consonants (terms that I don't normally use in class), it is possible to get your learners to pronounce /v/ starting from /f/, for example, or /ð/ starting from /θ/, and so on.

E – Explain. Look at this detailed explanation (by A C Gimson) for the /æ/ sound of English:

'The mouth is slightly more open than for /e/; the front of the tongue is raised just below the half-open position, with the side rims making a very slight contact with the back upper molars; the lips are neutrally open.'

If you're not very good at explaining phonetics to your students, don't do it. If you are good at explaining phonetics, **don't do it either**. Most explanations mean very little to most learners, especially teenagers, and you don't need to know what a *near-open, front, unrounded vowel* is in order to say the vowel in *cat*. Use imitation and demonstration, instead, and if they don't work, try association.

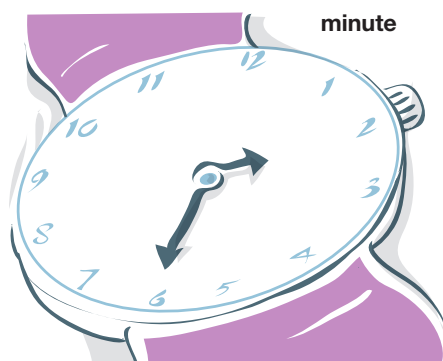
A – Association. The power of association is that it doesn't use logic to help learners to remember something. Instead, it appeals to other intelligences. If we are trying to help a group to distinguish between two problematic sounds, for example, we make their task easier by appealing to their visual intelligence and associating each sound with a different colour. For the sounds /æ/ and /e/ we could use black and red, for instance.

In addition to colours, we can show the class an image while we model a sound so that the image and sound become associated. We could associate

Sounds tricky

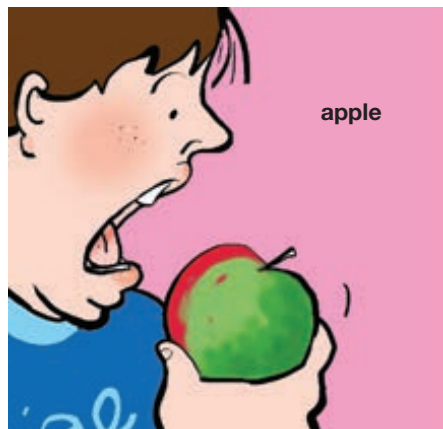


the short /ɪ/ vowel in *it* or *ship* with a picture of the dial of a watch and the word *minute*.



Better still, we could ask each student to think of an image that they personally associate with a difficult sound or word. The images they choose might be quite obvious, such as an apple and an egg for the vowels /æ/ and /e/, respectively. But they could be a lot more imaginative. In fact, the more personal and unusual the image that a student chooses, the more effective the technique.

My own favourite associations are those that appeal to my students' emotional intelligence. Often these are related to stories and/or actions. For /æ/, for instance, I ask my students to think of a large, juicy apple and to imagine that they are holding it in their hand. I then ask them to bring the apple towards their mouth and to take a big bite. Automatically this puts their mouths into the correct position for the associated sound. I might also show a picture of somebody about to bite an apple, and then ask them to say *apple*.



Philip Burrows

In later classes, it is usually enough to hold my imaginary apple to my mouth in order to get the students to open their mouths fully and produce a good /æ/ as opposed to an /e/ sound. As a technique, it is certainly a lot more effective than the explanation we read earlier.

There is a kinaesthetic aspect to this technique for the /æ/ sound and, of course, actions are especially good for working on word stress and rhythm. Clicking your fingers, clapping your hands, tapping the desk or stretching rubber bands are all recognised ways of using physical movement to reinforce the position of the stressed syllable in a word or the stressed syllables in a spoken sentence or phrase.

S – Stimulation. Stimulation brings us back to the need to show teenagers that we really care about their pronunciation. The simplest way to do this is consistently to seek good pronunciation and to demonstrate equally consistently your satisfaction at your teenagers' efforts to pronounce well. As an experienced teacher, you know that public praise of good performance can sometimes have a negative effect with teenagers. But that doesn't mean that we can't tactfully slip our learners a positive personal comment when they get a problematic feature right.

Marking

A major motivation for teenagers, of course, is the chance to get marks for what they do. In that respect, pronunciation should be no different from any other aspect of learning English. By giving it a mark you are showing that it matters and that you care about your students' progress. Once a term, for example, a friend of mine asks her students to prepare a text, thinking about the pronunciation. She chooses the text from the ones they have used that term, but always from texts that have a communicative content and that are typical of things her students might have to talk about in English. She is also careful to assess her students only on how well they pronounce a limited number of previously-agreed pronunciation features. Doing this makes it easier for them to prepare for the test, and also makes their final mark fairer and more meaningful to them.

With small groups with good classroom dynamics, it is possible to get the students to read a prepared text

aloud. But, as I suggested at the beginning of this article, many teenagers will feel too inhibited to do this well, and if this is the case for you, then let today's technology come to your rescue. With smartphones and tablets, it is easy to get students to record a text and to send it to you by email for marking. I'll be looking at using technology for teaching pronunciation in ETp 95.



Pronunciation is a challenging part of learning English, and teenagers are a challenging group of learners. On paper, it would seem that the two together make a bad mix. But it needn't be that way. By showing we care, by avoiding too much explanation, by appealing to their multiple intelligences, and by rewarding effort and progress with praise and marks, we can easily get teenagers interested in pronunciation. And once they are interested, the sky's the limit. **ETp**

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Bring on the sheep choir!

Samuel Barbour writes his own songs, poems and plays to make language learning fun and meaningful.

I am a native-speaker English teacher and freelance writer, working in a bustling, inner-city, Chinese-medium school in the New Territories in Hong Kong, and over the past five years I have seen the benefits of using original resources in the classroom to teach primary-level students. There is something truly magical in watching entire classes sing English songs in unison, free of the difficulties often encountered by second language learners.

Holistic learning

Learning a second language should be fun, especially for young learners. This is why approaches like Total Physical Response, Cooperative Language Learning and Task-Based Learning are popular in primary education. If the learning environment is supportive and interactive, the instructor's teaching style and voice projection are clear and the tasks have a personal and authentic theme and are varied to cater for different learner needs and intelligences, then young learners are likely to be engaged and learning will take place.

My school has implemented a holistic reading and writing programme, now in its fifth year, for students in primary levels one to three. Every week, the students have two one-hour classes in one of our colourfully-decorated English rooms with myself, a local teacher and a

classroom assistant. The students work either as a class or in small groups, seated around circular tables.

The task-based programme incorporates a variety of activities, using songs, poems, chants, drama and phonics, and there are also educational excursions. The students are introduced to a variety of text types through 'big book reading' and there is a home-readers system, with parent participation being actively encouraged through workshops. Each student's reading level is recorded at the end of the academic

year and formative assessment is ongoing. The students are encouraged to help each other and work together for the good of their groups. When they have completed primary level three, they are presented with a portfolio of their achievements over the past three years.

To the delight of everyone involved, this programme has started to bear fruit. It is noticeable, for example, that the students who were in the pilot year and who are now members of our after-school drama club display excellent listening skills and discipline and are able to understand the concept of a play very quickly. They are also more confident about speaking out and have a good sense of team spirit.

Authentic materials

Writing my own songs and chants for teaching phonics has led me to believe that authentic texts can greatly enhance learning, enrich study topics and provide a personal, fun experience for both teacher and student – especially if there is a guitar involved. The melodies from nursery rhymes are universally popular, and I use them frequently, changing the words to make them relevant, personal and interesting to my students. I use my own material in my day-to-day teaching as well as in a variety of extra-curricular and after-school activities.





Bring on the sheep choir!

Songs and poems

I have found it very useful to incorporate songs and poems into general English classes and extra-curricular classes whenever time allows. For example, I make it a habit to use a song as a warm-up activity, and sometimes as a warm-down activity as well. I try to incorporate audience participation, not only through singing but also through actions, dancing and clapping. I also use a guitar, tambourine and shakers frequently, as I believe live music is much more interesting for the students than recordings.

Poems can be a very useful way to learn key words or phonic sounds. I have found them especially useful when accompanied by an easier chant-like warm-up activity, using the same target vocabulary.

Drama and choral speaking

Every term, with the help of a local teacher and a classroom assistant, I run a drama club as an after-school activity. We recently performed a play called *Peter and the Wolf* (based on the story *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*) at an end-of-term drama show.

I wrote the script, basing it generally on the classic story, but with a few changes to suit my audience of Chinese primary school students. Simple language, dramatic irony, repetition, audience participation and humour work very well and can communicate the story and its moral to even the weakest of second language learners.

The play was written with both the participants' level of English and that of the student audience in mind. It required a total of ten one-hour classes to prepare, as well as two or three full dress rehearsals on the stage immediately prior to the show. Club members were reminded of the values of team spirit, cooperation and industry throughout, and by means of a series of roleplays, games and speaking exercises,

we rehearsed the lines and developed acting and communicative skills. Most of all, we enjoyed ourselves and felt part of a happy team.

Although the script was pre-prepared for them, the students were given high levels of autonomy regarding prop design, stage management and wardrobe decisions. The end product was a full production performed solely by the students, with myself and my two co-drama teachers enjoying the show as members of the audience. The drama students looked forward to and enjoyed the process of performing on stage, and many were exhilarated as they caught the 'acting bug' and overcame their initial fears of performing in a second language.

Over the last five years, I have produced eight different plays with my students, and I have observed that quite often the best performances are reserved for the actual show and that students worry most about forgetting their lines. However, their weakest areas have always been the acting itself: use of body language and general exaggeration of actions on the big stage, for example.

Some techniques I have used to overcome these initial challenges are informal small-group readings of the script, miming games, performing a particular scene using actions only and self-reflection, where the students are shown a recording of a previous show and asked to give honest feedback.

Throughout the classes, the students are also given full access to all the props they may need for the show (including microphones) as well as the music that may precede an entry or exit. I believe this sense of 'stage conditioning' helps the students to cope better on the day with the demands of a live stage performance.

Alongside the drama club, I teach a group of 14 students in a choral speaking club. For *Peter and the Wolf*, they became 'the sheep choir', performing several original songs (nursery rhymes with the lyrics changed to suit the play), which punctuated the drama and highlighted certain parts with music and humorous actions. Over the course of 16 one-hour sessions, they learnt the songs and also the basics of how to perform as a choir, complete

with entries, exits and breathing and warm-up exercises.

They are an energetic, gregarious bunch and the end result was terrific. They managed to perform unaided on the day, taking their cues from recordings of the songs I had prepared in advance, complete with my own voice, guitar accompaniment and funny sound effects. They thoroughly enjoyed the experience and received many positive comments afterwards from the teachers in the audience.

The year before, the same group recited an original poem called *Pirates* in the drama club's performance of *Treasure Island*. The poem was written in easy language in rhyming couplets; it had an exciting rhythm and pace, and was delivered with a series of accompanying actions. It was both scary and funny and the performance was enhanced by a colourful PowerPoint slideshow, which made it come alive.



Original resources take time and energy to create. However, the satisfaction you get from seeing something that you have created being used and enjoyed by a whole class of students as an effective way to learn English is wonderful. Students are fantastic sounding boards with regards to new ideas and will willingly give you honest feedback (good or bad!) about your latest song or poem.

As I write more and more original material, I find that the quality of my work improves and that it also becomes easier and quicker. I find that I become more tuned in to the needs of a particular class and this, in turn, shapes how I approach language complexity, word order, word count, rhythm and pace in a particular song, chant or poem. Practice makes perfect! **ETP**



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Over the wall ...

Alan Maley
wonders how free
is free?

The three books reviewed here explore the notion of freedom from different angles. How much of our supposed free behaviour is in fact the result of manipulation? In poet Robert Browning's words: 'So free we seem, so fettered fast we are.' Just how free are we to express our views? And what forces are at work to limit our freedoms? And where should the limits to freedom of expression be set?

Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion

Robert Cialdini's book is a direct successor to Vance Packard's iconic *The Hidden Persuaders*. He shows that many of the decisions we think we make freely are, in fact, influenced by a set of six principles which are often manipulated by what he calls 'compliance professionals'. These principles are: Reciprocity (the feeling of obligation to return a gift or favour, however small); Consistency (the way we commit to decisions we have made, and stick by them even when they are bad for us); Social proof (our tendency to go with the crowd); Liking (our tendency to prefer to accept the views of those we like); Authority (the way we unthinkingly

carry out orders from above) and Scarcity (the more something is in short supply, the more we want it). The book has a wealth of anecdotes and reports on social experiments, most of them to do with commerce, but the lessons apply equally to politics and the exercise of power more generally. Cialdini believes that these six 'shortcut' responses are necessary for us to cope with an increasingly complex and fast-moving world, but that we should be correspondingly aware of the potential for manipulation that they offer.

Brainwashing: The Science of Thought Control

Brainwashing by Kathleen Taylor is a most thorough and detailed account of attempts to control thought. In *Part I*, the origins and precursors of brainwashing are outlined. The word came into common use following the Korean War, when US prisoners of the Chinese were found to have had their beliefs radically remodelled through brainwashing techniques. In this part, there are interesting studies of classical brainwashing, of cult and religious cases, of persuasion through advertising and education. The author also looks at the way 'mental disorders' are

defined to serve the objectives of authority. She also turns a critical light on issues of military bonding, criminal justice as a tool of authority, domestic abuse as a form of mind control analogous to totalitarian regimes, and torture – the ultimate tool. She concludes with a discussion of free will, for without free will freedom would be meaningless.

Part II is a highly complex discussion of brain function and neurological research. Taylor argues that, if we are to understand the nature of brainwashing, we need to understand how the brain works. One essential fact to emerge is that the brain is not set hard like a diamond but is malleable like clay. This implies that it is open to manipulation from outside – but also that individuals can effect change in their own brains. 'At the heart of freedom is the sense of self-control.' This opens the way for an extensive discussion of free will and determinism. She argues strongly that we can resist manipulation through the power we have to 'stop and think' (as also advocated by Cialdini).

In *Part III* she continues the discussion of the nature of freedom, giving a chilling glimpse of possible future mechanisms of mind control, including nano-technology, neuro-surgery, genetic engineering,



chemical manipulation, and the substitution of virtual for real social environments. It is uncomfortable to reflect that the sci-fi imaginings of *The Bourne Inheritance*, *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* may be less fanciful than we think. In her final chapter, *Taking a Stand*, Taylor warns of the dangers of cultural, religious or political relativism and urges us to stand up and resist threats to freedom:

'We should be ensuring that groups are kept subordinate to law, so that no group doctrine can ignore an individual's free choice, whether that individual is a group member or not. We should be demanding that any such doctrine is open to free debate, that every citizen's vote counts equally, that the costs of leaving a group are not exorbitant, and that no group is allowed to impose its will on those who have not given ... informed consent ... and because we know that ideas are best fought with other ideas, we should be publicly debating, teaching and celebrating the virtues of anti-totalitarian ideologies, as well as warning against those which are demonstrably malign.' In this, education clearly has a key role to play (and this includes critical language education).

You Can't Read This Book

Nick Cohen's book offers us a passionate and outspoken defence of freedom of speech. As he says:

'True censorship removes choice. It menaces and issues commands that few can ignore. Write a free-thinking novel, and terrorists will come to assassinate you. Tell the world about your employer's incompetence, and they will deprive you of your livelihood. Criticise a pharmaceutical corporation or an association of "alternative health" quacks, and they will seek to bankrupt you in the English courts. Speak out in a dictatorship, and the secret police will escort you to jail.'

The book is divided into three parts: *God*, *Money* and *State*. In Part 1, *God*, he lays out some disturbing case histories; The Salman Rushdie 'fatwa', the hounding

of the great Indian artist Husain by Hindu extremists, the case of the Danish cartoons of the Prophet, the shameful treatment given to Hirsi Ali in Holland for standing up for women's rights, and several others. He is sharply critical of the western 'liberal intellectuals' who have generally not spoken up for freedom of expression, either out of fear of reprisals or out of a perverted sense of what human rights are. All too often, they have not defended those, like Rushdie or Hirsi Ali, who have been the victims of outrageous threats, but have rather stood by those who have perpetrated those acts, arguing that their victims 'had it coming to them' for daring to question traditional, cultural or religious values. Cohen stands firmly with John Stuart Mill in affirming that no idea, person or group should be immune from criticism, provided that no actual harm is done to individuals. The way to refine and strengthen ideas is through argument, not through imposition and threats. The culture of 'respect' and 'deference' which has grown up, he contends, has led to the strengthening of many ideas and practices which deserve no respect at all. (Some of these ideas are developed further in Richard King's book, see the references at the end.)

In Part 2, *Money*, Cohen reviews the obscene power of wealth and the British libel laws to gag any form of overt criticism. He again offers case studies: the 2008 financial crash, for which those responsible escaped retribution; the Roman Polanski case, where a convicted criminal was able to secure damages for libel in a British court; the murky Murdoch press empire and the hacking scandals; the way the litigious Robert Maxwell was able to stifle what proved to be true criticisms of his business practices; and the failed attempts to discredit and ruin Simon Singh for his criticism of the claims of chiropractors.

Part 3, *State*, is the shortest of the three parts, and concentrates on the issue of the internet. Much has been made of the liberty conferred by the internet on the individual. Cohen argues that, while this may have some truth, it obscures the enduring power wielded by totalitarian states in particular.

'Technology can change the rules, but it cannot change the game.' Totalitarian regimes have proved themselves well able to control what appears on the internet in their countries, and are adept at using it for their own persuasive or coercive purposes.

The style is journalistic and a little baggy in places; it could have used some radical editing. This is a pity, since the points Cohen is making are valid and worthy of our attention.



All three books urge us to become more critically aware, and to be willing to stand up for our beliefs and to argue our corner. As Cohen reminds us: *'Free societies are not free because their citizens are fighting for their freedoms. They are free because generations of citizens have fought for their freedom.'*

I will close with two quotations from Tom Paine (1739–1809), one of the most outspoken advocates of freedom:

'When men (sic) yield up the privilege of thinking, the last shadow of liberty quits the horizon.'

'Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must ... undergo the fatigue of supporting it.' **ETP**

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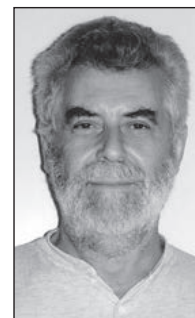
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Four walls, four boards

Chris Roland
believes good things
come in multiples.

When my new director showed me to my classroom and told me that I could put up whatever I wanted on the walls, she probably didn't have in mind another three whiteboards – to make one on each

wall. Nonetheless, no more than five minutes after I had suggested the idea, we were both brainstorming activities that would be possible in a four-boarded room. Our head office approved the project, and from January 2013 onwards, my classroom looked like this:



One classroom
and four boards
– so all this is
going on at the
same time.

Four walls, four boards

Four rationales

So what is the reasoning behind having four boards in one classroom?

1 Ownership and control

I believe the traditional layout of a classroom displays our conscious, unconscious or unconsciously-inherited assumptions about ownership and control. The board is clearly in the area of classroom demarcated as the teacher's. More than this, the board is 'guarded' by the teacher, as it were, who stands in front of it.

On a day-to-day basis, my concern is to teach people more English than they already know. That's my weekday work ethic, if you like. Somewhere in the background is the fairly firm belief that societal progress, to which education in general *could* contribute, hinges upon a more even distribution of authority and resources. Giving the students access to more of the classroom is congruent with this vision, and constitutes a shift, not only in terms of power, but also in what I refer to as *text shift*, *spatial shift* and *object shift*, which I have identified as ingredients of *fun* (see my article 'Cooking up fun' in ETp Issue 84).

2 Interactivity and engagement

On the level of activity, true interactivity lies in practical considerations, such as access to expression – here, textual – and freedom of movement through and between the various phases or facets of that activity. With regard to control of space, the board surface is the most fertile, focal area in a classroom. Being readily able to write on it (the most public form of writing in a class) for an extended period of time without there being another student hovering to snatch away the pen and without having to wait one's turn (*waiting one's turn* out of logistic necessity and *turn-taking* as a purposeful quality of interactive discourse are different things) really does allow the student to flow between thinking and doing, between conception, composition and presentation.

3 Mindset and technology

Regardless of our rush or reticence to digitalise classrooms, we might have

missed something, or at least not yet have fully explored or exploited the potential of non-digital boards. It may further be argued that what the teaching community has done with IWBs so far is to implement new technology with the hallmarks of a traditional mindset. With this project, my aim has been to break the classic blueprint for a classroom in a rudimentary but fundamental way.

4 Learning and the student's perspective

Many people claim to need to write something down to remember it and say that they learn by the actual process of writing. If this is true for writing something on paper, there is probably an even stronger case for learning by the physical action of writing on a board. Whilst we can also deploy class sets of mini-boards or even netbooks (both highly effective), standing up writing on a board *feels* different. It's a much fuller act of corporal expression, and the text is immediately 'out there' to be read simultaneously by anyone and to stare back at the writer, implicating them and demanding their accountability. This is what I mean when I say that writing on a board is a public act.

Writing on a board is also a privilege. It's what the teacher does. Most teachers will confirm that it's one of the things their students like doing the most.

Four points on implementation

1 How we set it up

With changes in the physical classroom structure, I predicted we would need some accompanying changes in rules. Once the boards were installed, but before we wrote a word on them, I introduced each of my young learner and adolescent classes to our new whiteboard code of conduct. I said: 'Before you write anything, ask yourself the following four questions. Is it *relevant*? Is it *appropriate*? Is it *useful*? Am I writing it *in the right place*?'

I expected to have to refer back to this code of conduct many times. I

haven't, though. 'Going to the boards' seems to have an immediately mollifying effect, focusing energies and giving the class more of a workshop feel. In the groups I've trialled the four boards with, there's been very little messing about indeed.

2 What we did

By dividing each board into two or three parts, all the students have been able to write at the same time. My teenagers have written letters of complaint, reports, articles, lists of tips on *How to ...* (with various activities) and letters to a friend – both individually and cooperatively.

My intermediate adult classes have practised writing descriptions of their favourite places and letters in which they talk about their plans or propose solutions to a problem. My elementary adults have written shorter texts about themselves and sentence-length answers to questions about their neighbourhoods, which they have peer-reviewed and read to each other. My young learners have



Picture dictations with everyone drawing

written letters introducing themselves and had the most fun, each standing at their own section of board, participating in whole-class dictations. In the most recent one, they drew and numbered circular faces and decorated them according to my instructions: 'OK, number 3. Are you ready? She has got curly hair.' They also got to add the text beneath each picture.

3 How it worked out

Throughout, I have been struck by how much easier it is for me to check and to provide input. Now when my students ask 'Teacher, how do you write ...?' I don't give them some piece of language

that answers their query on a technical level but doesn't actually fit their text, because I can see at a glance exactly what it is they're asking for. The context, and co-text, to their query is standing there right behind them. Where, before, I would have had to go over and spin their paper round or crane my neck to see (and after a number of such operations, the teacher soon gets tired), now I can answer multiple questions from a more central position or do the rounds, reviewing what each student has written with them, without having to stoop, crouch, squint or peer.

4 How we correct

Another advantage with a text that a student has written on a board is that they can more easily correct it – and are more inclined to do so. The original text wipes away and the student can assimilate the corrective teacher input into the text with very little effort, so that it bears neither a trace of the original error nor of the correction.

I've been correcting in two different ways. Sometimes I mark up the errors in a different coloured pen, leaving the student to rub out and rewrite the corrected section, or, if I have more time, I talk the student through a section of the text, and they make the changes as we go.

More boards, please!

The aim of this article is not to draw comparisons between traditional whiteboards and IWBs, or writing by hand versus typing onto a screen (which shares the advantages with regards to integrating correction discussed above). Rather, here I'm arguing the merits of increased student access to the board in and for itself. Writing on a board offers the right amount of attraction without over-stimulating. Students find a blank board or section of board inviting enough to want to write and to keep going with the task, but there are no peripheral distractions. There's certainly no flicking to social networks while the teacher's not looking! Writing on a board offers a straight one-to-one ratio with student production – it will only ever be what the student has put on it.

A board containing students' writing also pulls in readers and invites readership. I've been impressed by the amount of cross-fertilisation of ideas, and by how the students have picked up

on my corrections of texts on other boards or neighbouring sections of their board and have located similar errors in their own texts and corrected them without prompting by the time I get round to them.

Writing versus speaking

In the English classroom, speaking is normally public and writing is normally private. The whole class gets to hear what a student says, but it's usually only the teacher that gets to read what a student writes. Strange, I think, because as often as not it's the other way round in real life. Our days are full of private or semi-private conversations but much of what we write, such as blog entries, wall posts or forum comments, is for public viewing.

Partly perhaps because writing is pushed into this private transaction of being handed in, handed back and filed away (and often pushed out of class time altogether into homework), for many students writing is their weakest area. Texts are corrected in retrospect, not close to the moment of writing. Returned corrections stagnate on the paper in the student's file until looked at, if at all, by the student later on. By this time, even for them, figuring out why they wrote what they wrote in the first place constitutes in itself a re-enactment. Fresher, freer, more frequent and more open writing in class might help to redress the balance.

Modes and paradigms

Here, we are also replacing a more transmission-oriented teaching paradigm such as *'I've got something to teach, tell, show or explain to you'* with *'Let's see what you can do'* and consequently *'Let's see where you need help and where I can best place my teaching interventions and contributions from the finite energy resource that I am'*.

Finally, we can marry the new and the old or alternate between them. As well as my four new whiteboards, my class is fully equipped with projector, e-beam, internet and wi-fi. For one of the *How to ...* writings I discussed earlier, the input was a combination of useful phrases for *Dos* and *Don'ts* from our coursebook and a quirky *YouTube* clip of two engineers showing viewers how to get their cat to 'yodel'. I projected the clip while the students sat

taking notes. Then the projector went off, everyone got up, went to the boards and wrote up their own guide to cat yodelling.



I imagine I won't always be lucky enough in the future to have boards all around my classrooms. Based on my experience so far, though, I am convinced that classrooms with several writable surfaces *are* the way forward. It may well be that advances in projector technology will eventually make this widespread, but in the meantime, as I hope I've shown here, there's plenty we can be doing with the technology we already have. **ETp**

Acknowledgements

I'm in the fortunate position of working at a forward-thinking institution which, while involved with some innovative tech-teaching projects, is at the same time both confident and flexible enough in its positioning to help me take a sideways step and re-evaluate a more classic tool. Special thanks are due to my director at our El Porvenir teaching centre, Linda Ferguson, for her enthusiasm from the outset, and to ELI's managing committee, Richard Johnson, Bridget Buckley, Elspeth Pollock and Michael Ball, whose further support made this possible.



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Do something different with your coursebook



Rachael Roberts continues her series on adapting your coursebook to suit your classes. In this issue, she does something different with lexical sets.

Most coursebooks present new vocabulary in lexical sets (groups of related words). The reasons for this are pretty obvious: lessons are usually topic-based, so a topical lexical set will give students the opportunity both to see the words in context in a reading or listening text and to use them in context in a speaking or writing activity.

However, despite this perfectly logical rationale, students rarely come away from the lesson confidently using the new lexis. This is partly because it actually takes a lot of practice and learning to get a new word or phrase to 'stick', but it may also be because putting words into lexical sets is not, in fact, a very good way of helping students to memorise them.

Paul Nation quotes research by Thomas Tinkham and Robert Waring, who found that when all the words to be learnt in a group were related to each other, it took from 47 to 97 percent more repetitions to learn the words than when the words in the group were unrelated.

This is interesting, but it is unlikely to affect coursebook design dramatically because lots of lists of completely unrelated words would not lend themselves to very coherent lessons. It should, however, at least encourage us to get our students to work with new vocabulary items in some depth.

Coursebooks will generally provide controlled practice activities, such as gap-fills and matching tasks, and freer practice opportunities, where the students can personalise or use the vocabulary in a less constrained way. What they don't tend to do as much is to allow the students to explore and analyse the lexical items. However, there are lots of activities which we can add to the coursebook which will allow the students to go that bit deeper, and thus make them more likely to remember and use the items in future.

Focus on meaning

If the lexical items come out of a reading or listening text, you can encourage the students to notice them for themselves

before they look at the vocabulary box. This will make it more likely that they will remember the words later, as well as focusing them more on the context in which the words arise. Simply ask the students to find ten words which describe, for example, personality, and then ask them to compare their ideas with their neighbour. It is quite possible that they will find words which aren't in the lexical set, or about which they disagree. If this happens, it's an added bonus, as discussing which words should be included in the set will start to get them to engage with the words and their meaning.

Other activities for exploring meaning might include asking the students to find synonyms for as many of the words as possible. The class can then discuss any differences in meaning between the synonyms, which will help to clarify the exact meaning of the words in the lexical set.

You could also ask pairs of students to put the words into groups of three or four, with one word being the odd one out. They then give the grouped words to another pair, who have to find the

odd one out and explain why. Again, this activity actually works better if the answer isn't obvious, or there is more than one answer, as the students then have to spend time explaining the reasons for their choices.

One of the problems with lexical sets can be that in order to make up a set, the teacher or coursebook writer has sometimes been forced to include items which are not actually used very frequently. This makes it hard for students (or the teacher) to decide which items they should concentrate on. A simple follow-up task that you can do with any lexical set of single words is to ask the students to work together to divide the words into high-frequency, medium-frequency and low-frequency, just using their intuition. For example: *accuse, burglar, caught, community, court, drugs, fraud, guilty, judge, jury, manslaughter, mugger, murderer, punishment, smuggling*.

While they do this, or in advance, you can put the words into a frequency checker, such as www.longmandictionaries.usa.com/vocabulary_checker. You then award points to each pair or group, depending on how accurate their guesses were. Incidentally, the highest-frequency words here, those in the top 3,000 words, are *caught, community, court, drugs, guilty, judge* and *punishment*. The lowest-frequency words, in the top 9,000, are *manslaughter* and *smuggling*.

Focus on form

Although words in lexical sets often appear in isolation, in real life they come with lots of other words around them. Key information, such as dependent prepositions (eg *look at something*) should be in the coursebook, but there is usually a lot more to know about how a word is used in context than you are likely to find there. If the word is in a text or audio recording, you can get the students to look at the words around it and see if there are any probable collocations. For example, in a lesson on weather, seeing the words '*... there was going to be a terrible storm ...*', the students might guess that *terrible* is a word often used with *storm*. These guesses or intuitions can then be checked by using a site such as www.just-the-word.com. When you put in the word *storm*, *terrible* is, indeed, one of the most frequent adjectives that collocates with it (others are *bad, sudden, violent, severe* and *tropical*).

The grammar of the word is also vital. If the lexical set is a set of verbs, for example, can the students produce the past simple and past participle forms? Do they know the 'pattern' of the verb? For example: *explain something to someone*.

Word formation and affixation are also important areas. Try giving each pair of students one of the words in the lexical set and asking them to look it up in the dictionary and note down the related words they find (eg *a storm, to storm, stormy*). They can then report back to the class on what they found.

Or ask groups of students to make as many new words as possible with the items in the lexical set, using prefixes and suffixes. For example: *generous* – *generously, ungenerous, generosity*.

There are also lots of games and activities you can do to help your students with the spelling of new words. For example, put them into teams and let them take turns to give a word from the lexical set to someone on the other team. That person then has to spell and define it correctly.

Or you can get the students to write down half the words from the lexical set with either just consonants and gaps for vowels, or (harder) vice-versa. For example:
G _ N _ R _ _ S or _ E _ E _ OU _
(*generous*)

They then give their gapped words to a partner, who has to complete the gaps without looking back at the set of words.

And, of course, we shouldn't forget that knowing how to pronounce a word is also an important part of being able to use it. We can, for example, ask the students to categorise the words in the set according to their stress pattern, or ask them to group them according to the vowel sound in the syllable with the main stress. Or, with monolingual groups who confuse certain sounds, we can dictate the words and ask the students to put them into categories depending on whether the sound is, for example, /l/ or /r/ or /b/ or /p/.

Focus on revision

As we saw above, there is evidence to suggest that it is easier to learn words which aren't in lexical sets, and revision activities provide a perfect opportunity to mix up the words from previously-studied lexical sets.

A variety of words can be reviewed through activities such as 'backs to the board', where one team member tries to guess the word written on the board behind them through the clues given by their team-mates (who can see the word).

However, it can be useful to encourage the students to continue to think about the original lexical sets through various categorising activities. For example, get small groups to brainstorm words within particular lexical sets that the class have studied recently. Each group puts the words on separate slips of paper. The slips are then redistributed and the students walk around the room saying their word until they find members of their group. This new group then works together to write a short text using all their words. A further stage is for the group to read their text aloud, while the others listen and write down what they think were the original lexical items.

Alternatively, stick the words from all the lexical sets around the room and get the students to go round in pairs, writing them down and deciding which set they belong to. You can then allocate a set to each pair and carry out the final stages of the activity above.



Adding some of these activities to your repertoire should not only help you to provide more varied activities, but should also help your students to memorise and be able to use more of the hundreds of words presented in your coursebook. **ETP**

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Lesson threads and projects

The staffroom can be the source of a wealth of knowledge for all teachers. Both new and veteran teachers can take advantage of the years of experience and the varied teaching styles that other teachers can offer.

This series mimics a friendly staffroom environment where teachers share and access useful tips on how best to meet the needs of their students. Trawling through textbooks or websites may uncover some fantastic activities, but can also be time-consuming, whereas the staffroom often provides quick and valuable tips. The ideas you read here have been proposed by experienced teachers from a busy ESL college in Sydney, Australia.

The tips in this issue of ETP concern lesson threads and projects; using these is a valuable skill for teachers to acquire.

Threads

New teachers can feel overwhelmed as they make the transition from a pre-service training course to regular teaching. The pressures of planning lessons for many classes can be very demanding. Some teachers will find they fall into the pattern of spending a great deal of time preparing their next day's lessons, and they may find that they don't have time to look beyond the next one. Treading water like this can be very stressful.

However, using 'threads' enables teachers to prepare for an entire week or course more easily. Threads are sequences of similar lessons that are 'woven' into the schedule at regular times. For example, many teachers of intensive English courses use the first two lessons on a Monday to recycle the materials that were studied in the previous week. Weekly tests are often scheduled at the end of the week. Many teachers use coursebooks that require them to teach two grammar points per week. These grammar lessons may be scheduled as the first lessons taught on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Using threads allows you to step back and use a bird's eye view to schedule your lesson types carefully, helping you to deliver a cohesive sequence of lessons.

Once you have planned the lesson types, you can then choose the best materials for each lesson.

Projects

Projects employ a task-based learning approach and are highly student-centred. They can last a day, a week or even a semester. Working individually or in groups, the students complete a number of stages in the course of each project. Groupwork allows the students to collaborate and empowers them. In fact, once a project is up and running, the skilled teacher knows when to back away and allow the group to teach, and learn from, each other.

Many projects have the following stages:

- 1 Teacher introduces the project.
- 2 Student groups choose their topic and begin their research.
- 3 Each group drafts their project.
- 4 Each group finalises their project.
- 5 The project (poster, essay, report, video, PowerPoint) is submitted.
- 6 Groups deliver an oral presentation of their work.
- 7 Peer feedback is given.
- 8 Teacher feedback is given.



1 Keep a generic weekly timetable of the threads you use above your desk. It should show what type of threads you use at different times during the week.

2 Use threads to allow you to balance the different skills/lessons that you teach each day and each week.

3 'Show and tell' threads allow the students to reveal what they are interested in, and help them develop the confidence to speak in front of their classmates. You may wish to employ a thread of having the students take turns to give a one- or two-minute 'show and tell' presentation. Topics can range from their hobbies to current affairs to that week's theme. Posting the presentation schedule on the classroom wall at the beginning of the course will give the students time to prepare.

4 Student-chosen lessons are a fun change from typical teacher-selected lessons, and can be an interesting and popular thread. At the beginning of the week, the students vote on a variety of lesson options that you have provided. The chosen lesson is then taught at the end of the week.

5 Start an online thread activity by posting a question on the social media or a class blog for the students to comment on. Many students are technologically savvy and prolific users of social media. They will often engage in online activities.

6 When forming project groups, remember to create groups of at least three or four students, so that other students can continue their project even if some members of their team are absent.

7 Storing group project work in the cloud enables the students to access and edit it outside the classroom.

8 Keep project topics as general as possible (eg future goals, famous people, business plans, case studies). This will enable each student group to fine-tune their project topic to fit their own interests.

9 Provide feedback to students throughout the project, rather than waiting until it is submitted and completing summative assessment. Your assistance will help your students to deliver an improved project, and will minimise your marking load when the project is over.

10 Encourage your students to incorporate visual images (photos, pictures, statistics) in their projects. Their projects will be more appealing, and you can inspire your current students by decorating your classroom with projects from former students.



Sasha Wajnryb teaches adult international students in a large college in Australia. He has worked in ELT for 15 years as a teacher, academic manager and consultant.

If you want to share an idea in the ETP community staffroom, feel free to email it to sasha.wajnryb1@tafensw.edu.au.



Teaching English One to One

By Priscilla Osborne

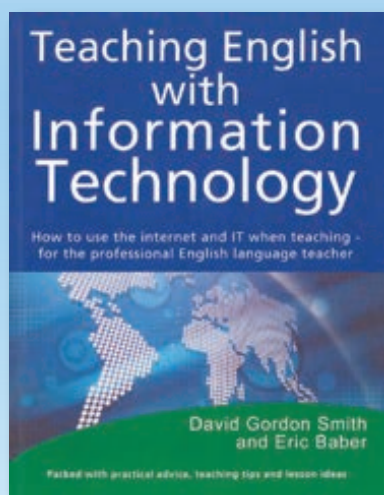
This practical book provides an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of teaching students on a one-to-one basis and will enable you to:

- Develop a learner needs analysis
- Produce learner profiles
- Plan effective courses
- Use the learner as a resource.

208 pages

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Teaching English with IT

By David Gordon Smith and Eric Baber

This book shows how to use information technology when teaching English and is packed full of practical ideas, so you can:

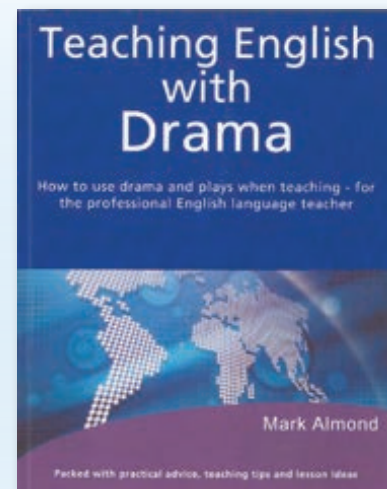
- Use IT in your teaching in the most effective way
- Find IT-related activities that work with your lesson plans
- Understand learning management systems
- Manage IT issues.

Topics covered include: email; websites; web-based activities; professional training online; text chat and much more.

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By Mark Almond

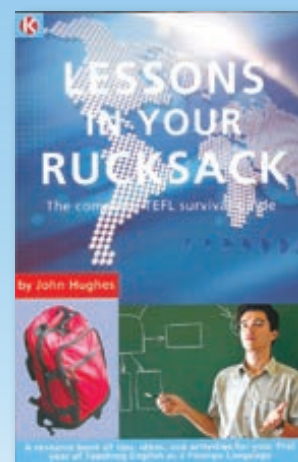
This book shows you how to understand the benefits of acting skills and improve learning by using drama, plays and theatre techniques in your lessons and covers a wide range of subjects for teachers including how to:

- Plan drama-related class work
- Choose appropriate texts and modify dialogue for different levels of students
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By John Hughes

An exciting practical guide for newly-qualified teachers and teachers embarking on a gap year.

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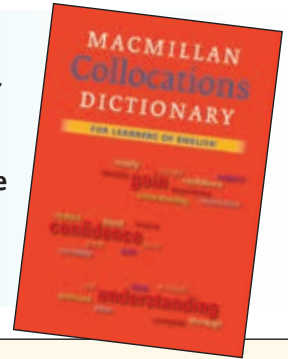
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IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

More tested lessons, suggestions, tips and techniques which have all worked for ETp readers. Try them out for yourself – and then send us your own contribution. Don't forget to include your postal address.

All the contributors to It Works in Practice in this issue of ETp will receive a copy of the *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary*. Macmillan have kindly agreed to be sponsors of It Works in Practice for this year.



To do or not to do

This is a fun activity to help the students memorise verb patterns. It is very simple, but always produces good results with my classes.

I prepare a set of cards with verbs on them, and either distribute them equally (placing them face down) among pairs of students or allow each student to pick one at random each time. On the board I write, for example, *to do homework*, *doing homework* and *do homework*. Then I ask the students to use their verbs to produce correct sentences – all about doing homework. Some of their sentences make everybody smile. For example, one student who tends to be a little lazy picked a card with *promise* on it and made the sentence 'I promise to do my homework'. Other students had to say 'I refuse to do my homework', 'I can't wait to do my homework' and 'I'm keen on doing homework'.

Apart from being entertaining, the activity helps the students to memorise the verb patterns. The sentences stick in their memories because they are relevant (doing homework is part of their language learning) and often amusing, something which always makes things memorable.

*Nataliya Potapova
Uzhhorod, Ukraine*

Find your other half

This is an activity which practises idioms, though it can also be used for any other specific language structure. You will need an overhead projector and some cards.

- 1** Prepare a set of idioms on an overhead projector transparency, one idiom for each pair of students. Split the idioms into two halves, and write each half on a separate card, one labelled A and the other B. For example, A might be *Get out of bed* and B might be *on the wrong side*.
- 2** Show the students the set of complete idioms on the transparency, explain their meanings as many times as needed, then remove the transparency.
- 3** Put the idiom halves face down on your desk in two piles, A and B.
- 4** Divide the class into two teams, A and B, and tell them that each student in Team A should take a card from the A pile, and each student in Team B should take a card from the B pile.
- 5** Tell Team A to go round the classroom and try to find the B partner(s) whose idiom half will complete the one they have. They should do this by reading out their half of the idiom. Give them a one-minute time limit to do this.
- 6** Tell the Team B students that they must shake their heads if they don't hear the correct other half of their idiom from a Team A student. If they aren't sure, they should remain silent.

If the Team B students are sure that the idiom half that they hear is the correct match for theirs, they must show their card to their A partners, write their names on the back of both cards and stand aside.
- 7** Go round and check quickly that the students have matched their idioms correctly.
- 8** Collect all the cards and ask the groups to swap roles (Team B becomes Team A), explaining that they must now pick a card that does not bear their name or their previous partner's name.
- 9** Get the students to repeat the previous steps until each student has been exposed to all the idioms.
- 10** Ask the students to return to their desks and write on a sheet of paper as many idioms as they can remember. Set a time limit for this, and then ask them to exchange sheets and check them against the overhead projector transparency, awarding one point for each correct idiom. The student with the most points wins.

*Mohammed Arroub and Riyad Al-Homsi
Homs, Syria*

Four five-minute fillers for young learners

Have you ever had one of those young learner lessons where you race through your material and then find yourself with five minutes to spare? Don't panic. Here are some fun fillers to pad out your plan.

Shark

This is like Hangman, but with more of a 'Pirates of the Caribbean' feel. Divide your class into two teams (try to mix up the most and least able students). If necessary, write the alphabet at the bottom of the board, with the students calling out each letter.

Draw a shark with a wide-open mouth in the middle of the board. The students guess what it is as you draw it – if they don't know, you can tell them at the end. Next, draw five or six short horizontal lines on either side of the shark's mouth (these are 'chances' for each team). Finally, draw letter spaces for a word, as you would for Hangman.

Team A (or whichever team is sitting quietly) guesses a letter first. If it's correct, fill in the gap. If not, write the letter underneath the first of Team A's chance lines. Above, draw a stick man.

Play continues until a team guesses the word or uses all their chances, at which point their stick figure falls into the shark's mouth and gets eaten! This works well with one-to-one lessons, too: instead of another team, your student plays against the clock.

Vocabulary shoot-out

This quick and kinaesthetic game is great for revising vocabulary – and you can easily play a few rounds in five minutes.

Get two students to stand back-to-back at the front, holding two fingers up like a gun. Use the pair to demonstrate. Explain that you will say words from a recent topic, eg food words or school

words, and each time the students hear a word, they take one step forward. However, when you say a 'colour word', they must turn and finger-shoot their partner. For example you might say, 'Egg, potato, fish, GREEN!' On *green*, the students turn and shoot. The first person to turn round and shoot is the winner.

(Obviously, cultural sensitivity is important here. Luckily this game is incredibly easy to adapt – if you don't think a shoot-out is appropriate, simply change the action to the first student to touch the floor, the first student to shout a particular word, etc.)

Build and destroy

This simple board game is perfect for competitive classes. Divide the class into two teams (again, try to mix up the most and least able students). Draw two large squares on the board, one for each team. Inside each square draw a cross so that the large square is made up of four smaller ones.

Explain to the class that each large square represents their team. Tell them that you will ask a question and the first team to answer correctly chooses to build (draw lines to create another small square on the original, to make five small squares) or destroy (rub out a small square from the opposing team's original, leaving them with three squares).

Restore both squares to four small squares each. Set a quiz question either revising new vocabulary or a grammar point. The teams work to come up with an answer. They can then build their own squares or destroy their opponents' store. The winning team has the most squares at the end. Play ends when a team loses all their squares or when you've asked a certain number of questions.

What's missing?

Best played with flashcards, this game can also be adapted for things you have in the classroom (pens, books, board erasers, etc).

Get the students sitting in a circle on the floor or rearrange the desks so that they can all see. Place the items in the middle of the circle (or on the middle desk) and check the students know the vocabulary by pointing and eliciting.

Tell them to close their eyes or turn away. Make sure there are no cheaters! Remove one item and rearrange the others. Tell the students to open their eyes and ask them what's missing. The first person to answer correctly gets to be the teacher for the next round.

Alternatively, send one student outside or to the corner of the room (facing the wall) and choose a volunteer to remove an item, allowing the other students to whisper suggestions. This gets everyone involved in the decision-making process and they're in on the secret, too.

*Fiona MacIntyre
Crawley, UK*



Do you have an idea which you would like to contribute to our *It Works in Practice* section? It might be anything from an activity which you use in class to a teaching technique that has worked for you. Send us your contribution, by post or by email, to helena.gomm@pavpub.com.

All the contributors to *It Works in Practice* get a prize! We especially welcome joint entries from teachers working at the same institution. Why not get together with your colleagues to provide a whole *It Works in Practice* section of your ideas? We will publish a photo of you all.

Less is more

Simon Andrewes
often prefers simplicity to
sophistication in writing in
English as a *lingua franca*.

Research, studies and observations on English as a *lingua franca* (ELF) have, as far as I can see, tended to focus on oral communication. Barbara Seidlhofer's Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) is based on observations of oral exchanges between non-native speakers – at least, in part, precisely because they are dynamic and not subject to the stabilising and standardising influence of writing. Jennifer Jenkins has focused on pronunciation as the major cause of communication breakdown between interlocutors with non-shared L1s. Much of Robin Walker's work on ELF has been to find teaching techniques to overcome the problems of pronunciation identified by Jenkins. This focus on oral exchanges is entirely justifiable, but at the same time there is no doubt that written communication in English makes up a significant proportion of communicative exchanges between non-native speakers, making it too important to overlook.

Causes of concern

While we can see from a survey by GlobalEnglish Corporation (in the box above) the importance oral communication has for users of ELF in business contexts, emailing also stands out as a major cause of concern for many of them, and documentation presents problems for a majority of those surveyed. I imagine concern with preparing for meetings also includes an element of anxiety about presenting

What business situations cause the most difficulty when using English?

1 Telephone calls	80%
2 Emails	75%
3 Meetings	75%
4 Socialising	70+%
5 Answering questions	65%
6 Documents	60%
7 Presentations	55%
8 Travel	50%
9 Negotiations	40+%

effective written communication, while written language in visual presentations is crucial to helping the audience to follow an argument delivered via *PowerPoint*.

These written forms of communication are, generally speaking, fairly close to spoken forms. Emails and presentations both require a written form that is close to spoken language, even though this is not the informal style of conversation but a more demanding form of public or semi-public speech delivery. Academic or business emails do not have the casual intimacy of exchanges between friends. While maintaining a positive cordial relationship, they require a business-like style that in some way represents the writer's company or institution. Writing for presentations needs to support the oral delivery, which again demands a more formal than informal style of delivery.

Purpose and achievement

The criteria for competence in English as a written means of global communication are not very different from those that apply to successful oral communication. In meaningful communication through written or spoken language, the decisive factor is whether the message has been received successfully: whether the intention of the transmitter of the message has been properly understood by the receiver. In the assessment of language, this is often known as 'achievement of the task'. In the end, this is the over-riding factor, to which others – and I am especially thinking of linguistic factors such as grammatical accuracy and vocabulary resources – are subservient.

Central to effective written communication is the question of purpose or intention. To know whether the task has been achieved, we must know what the writer set out to do. Purpose will be a determining factor for the choice of the genre in which the message is set. Choice of genre will, in turn, determine the appropriate complexity and range of language and the required degree of organisational sophistication or elaboration. Writing a report on the current financial situation of your company would require a lesser degree of organisational development and linguistic fluency than a discursive essay written for the School of Economics, where a much higher level of linguistic and structural sophistication would be called for.

Context and communication

The problem that I am outlining here takes me back to language work I was doing with a radiologist in Spain. His job was to describe what he saw on an MRI scan and pass this information on in a written report to a specialist physician, who would then interpret and evaluate it, in order to act on it. For reasons to do with the rationalisation of work processes, the radiologist needed to do this in English. After studying some genuine native-speaker English language reports to use as models, he was surprised by the paucity and repetitiveness of the language. It was mostly limited to short simple and compound sentences, almost all following the structure: *there is/there isn't/there's no/there are/there aren't/there are no*.

The Spanish convention made use of a wide variety of structures to say what was or wasn't in the scan, for which in English it might have been difficult to find enough equivalents: *we can see/can be seen/appear(s)/is (are) to be found-observed-noted/is (are) present/occur(s)*.

To know whether the task has been achieved, we must know what the writer set out to do

Stylistically, in Spanish, repetition was odious and to be resisted at all costs.

The point with the apparently excessively simple language and organisational pattern in the English was that it guided the target reader's (the specialist physician's) attention immediately to the presence or absence of symptoms that gave vital information about the patient's state of health, such as the presence or absence of a tumour, or other pathologic or damaged tissue. On this evidence, the decision was made whether to intervene or not, how, and with what urgency. This was the purpose of the communication, the fulfilment of which was best achieved through a starkly unadorned style of language.

Communication between native speakers can depend on certain assumptions with regard to language use and conventions that communication between users of English as a *lingua*

Because they cannot assume shared knowledge, it is all the more important for lingua franca users to strive for clarity and simplicity in their communication

franca cannot. Because they cannot assume this shared knowledge, it is all the more important for *lingua franca* users to strive for clarity and simplicity in their communication, steering clear of any language usage that might lead to ambiguity and misunderstanding. The achievement of this over-riding goal of clarity may well be at the cost of other sociolinguistic factors, such as register or high degrees of linguistic virtuosity.

In an interesting study of Greek users of English as a *lingua franca* in business email contexts, carried out by Artemis Charidou, interviewees showed themselves to be very conscious of these issues, stressing the paramount importance of sending and receiving information quickly, and without ambiguities that might lead to a wrong interpretation of the message. *'Ambiguous sentences may hide real intentions in contrast to direct ones'*, said one. On the

For ELF users, linguistic sophistication per se is of secondary importance when it comes to pursuing a concrete communicative purpose

question of following conventions and applying an appropriate range of register and maybe elegant prose structure, another commented pointedly: *'The fact that she answered five minutes later was more important for me at that point than structure and formalities.'* These cases show that for ELF users, linguistic sophistication *per se* is of secondary importance when it comes to pursuing a concrete communicative purpose in a concrete context.

Purpose in communication can hardly be considered without contextualisation. We have already asserted that choice of genre will 'determine' the appropriate complexity and range of language and the required degree of organisational sophistication or elaboration. In the case of business emails, it has been argued that there are potential contradictions between the minimalism of the email genre, with its short, fragmentary utterances, abbreviations and elliptical discourse, bringing it close to forms of spoken discourse on the one hand, and the formality and 'distance' required in business communication on the other. These contradictions are discussed at greater length in Artemis Charidou's dissertation. This minimalism, as I understand it, is akin to the simple, unadorned style that we saw in the radiologist's reports. However, Charidou cites a suggestion by Joan Mulholland that the minimalism of email writing may go so far as to undermine business relationships. Yet Charidou points out how the email genre suits its users' need for business-efficient conciseness and, as ELF users, their need for clarity and simplicity to ensure comprehensibility.

The users of ELF interviewed by Charidou resolved these potential contradictions case by case, in accordance with the specific purpose and context of the communication. Generally

Effective communication might be best achieved through a simple rather than complex linguistic style, with simple sentences and a limited range of vocabulary

genres? So far, the written communication we have considered has been in the form of reports and emails, which are seen as relatively basic. But even where a much higher level of linguistic and structural sophistication is called for, as, for example, in the discursive essay written for the School of Economics mentioned earlier, what in ELF contexts is considered to be successful, convincing and/or satisfactory communicational achievement depends on the effect the writing has on the target reader – in this case the tutor or the marker – rather than by any prescribed rules of language. Whether it involves writing a business report or an academic essay, communicating ideas with clarity is not strictly governed by absolute standards of native-speaker accuracy and fluency.

This can be demonstrated by observations that critical thinking teacher Roy Edwards recorded from his experience of teaching at a business school:

'On a number of occasions, coursework essays written by native speakers were given a fail grade, while the essays of international students with an approximate upper-intermediate level of English were awarded a decent pass, despite minor deductions for language. This situation arose as the central grading criteria demanded evidence of an ability to analyse the question, define key concepts, narrow down the focus, create a thesis statement with a clear line of argument in relation to the question, identify and summarise appropriate concrete evidence, present arguments in a logical order, use correct conventions and produce a conclusion that can be justified in relation to the evidence provided.'

If native-speaker norms have such a minor impact in this relatively ENL

(English as a National Language) academic context, they will be even less relevant in more clearly ELF contexts.

As an anecdotal corollary to this, the manager of a social services provider told me that he often felt the need to rewrite reports that his staff had formulated. The reports were written by literate, well-educated native or expert speakers, but nonetheless they were affected by problems of organisation, a barely recognisably coherent development of ideas, inconsistent or defective cohesive devices; in short, a general confusion and lack of clarity. Such are the decisive factors in the achievement of communication goals, rather than the correct use of verb tenses or varied and extensive vocabulary resources.

Simplicity and sophistication

The conclusion I draw from the arguments outlined in this article is that a high degree of sophistication of language and organisational structure is not valuable in itself, but only in as far as it contributes to the achievement of the particular communicative goals in hand. A discursive academic essay would require linguistic and stylistic features that would be inappropriate for a business email.

Effective communication might, then, be best achieved through a simple rather than complex linguistic style, with simple sentences and a limited range of vocabulary. Simplicity of language with a limited variety and range of structure and lexis may in cases be preferable to virtuoso displays of sophistication, indicating in fact a more appropriate degree of control over the subject matter and expressing the intended message more precisely. Elaborate cohesive devices might indeed be inappropriate and even a distraction from the message being transmitted. Organisational sophistication might, in certain cases, obstruct the message to be conveyed, as we noted in our discussions on the choice of language in the MRI scan reports and avoiding ambiguity in business emails. So successful achievement of the communicative task in hand does not necessarily go hand in hand with the highest levels of language range, fluency and precision or of structural coherence and flexibility.



In short, my argument is that there is no direct relationship between organisational and linguistic complexity or elaboration and communicative achievement – in the sense of the more complex and elaborate the language, the more effective the intended achievement. The effective transmission of the message content depends more on genre and target audience awareness than on factors related to the demonstration of language competence and organisational dexterity.

On receiving a written communication, the target reader's primary concern is most likely to be:

- Does this piece of writing tell me what I want or need to know?
- Does it direct me quickly to the essential points?
- Is the argument easy to follow, well thought-out, appropriately developed and convincing?
- Does it stick to the point, without digressions or irrelevances or excessive detail?
- Does it make sense to me without my having to read and re-read passages to work out the drift?

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Simon Andrewes teaches EAP on pre-session courses to international students in Birmingham, UK. His main interests currently revolve around assessment and feedback, communication in lingua franca (rather than native-speaker) contexts and pronunciation. He also teaches German and Spanish.

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Reviews

Reflective Writing for Language Teachers

by Thomas S C Farrell

Equinox 2013

978-1-84553-537-7

Reflective Writing for Language Teachers is directed at both new and experienced ELT practitioners, with the aim of helping them to harness writing as a means of supporting reflective practice, something which nowadays is itself considered to be key to teacher education and professional development.

To me, this book seems to be a rich project to be undertaken, rather than something simply to be read from cover to cover: each of its seven chapters contains various tasks to perform, tasks which encourage teachers to question and discuss their own beliefs and practice, and which guide them through the process of evaluating these critically, through the medium of writing. The tasks could be tackled alone, with a colleague

or as a group activity for continuing professional development (CPD). Teacher educators might also wish to incorporate this book into a module on their training courses.

It is interesting to see a book with such a narrow focus: reflective practice and, within that, reflective writing. What results is an in-depth, detailed coverage of this area. The book follows a logical outline, from broad themes, such as the role of professional development in language teaching, to narrower focuses, such as reflective practice activities, different formats for writing reflectively, and the use of journals and narrative writing, then connecting this back to the bigger picture by demonstrating how it fits into the different stages of one's development from novice teacher to experienced professional, and finally taking the whole concept a step further: to the possibility of doing 'reflective research'.

One potential drawback could be that working through this book alone, alongside a full teaching timetable, might

prove rather a tall order.

Any teacher attempting this might find that their motivation would dwindle too early for any benefits to be reaped. In addition, a teacher using it for self-study would miss out on the value of the discussions which are encouraged regularly throughout the book. However, if you have a receptive staffroom, a keen group of teachers and the stamina to persevere with it, this book may provide the possibility for a really useful thread of extra professional development.

Writing is certainly a powerful tool, so it is good to see a book that recognises this and tries to help teachers harness it, to the benefit of their practice and, ultimately, their careers. I think it would be very interesting to see a range of

reports written by teachers who have worked their way systematically through all the activities offered, comparing the outcomes they have experienced with the intended outcomes of the book.

Lizzie Pinnard

Palermo, Italy

Subscribers can get a 12.5% discount on this book. Go to the ETP website and quote ETPQR0314 at the checkout.

Storytelling with Our Students

by David Heathfield

Delta Publishing 2014

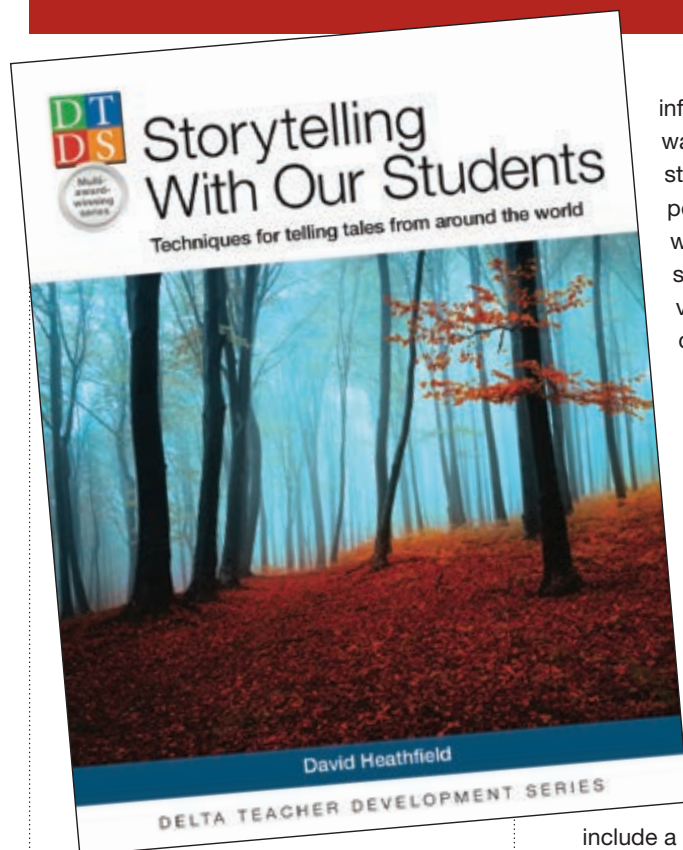
978-1-905085-87-3

This is a welcome addition to the already popular Delta Teacher Development Series. It comes from one of the best-known storytellers in ELT, so my expectations were high – and I was not to be disappointed.

The book follows the standard, three-part format for the series. Part A is in two sections. The first offers a historical overview of storytelling, ways of relating storytelling to teaching, and what teachers can do to incorporate stories into their lessons. It also details the benefits to learners, both in terms of their language and their personal development. This is followed by a very useful overview of the chapters in Part B of the book. In this way, the prospective user can see at a glance where to find sections focusing on voice, use of the face and body, repetition, and so on.

Part B constitutes the bulk of the book. It comprises three chapters: *The teacher as storyteller*, *Creative ways in and out of stories* and *The student as storyteller*. Chapter One focuses on the skills and techniques teachers need to become effective as storytellers: use of the body and voice, various ways of using repetition, and suggestions for engaging with the listeners through interaction. Chapter Two moves on to suggest some imaginative ways of getting into a story – and getting out of it – including prediction activities, active response and





exploration of metaphor, mental imagery and meaning. Chapter Three offers techniques for involving the students as storytellers on their own account. These range from re-telling, through story-mapping and various forms of performance, to the creation of new endings and entire new stories.

Part C is the shortest of the three. It aims to take the teacher further into the exploration of storytelling. There are three sections: *In the classroom*, *Beyond the classroom* and *Joining forces*. In the first section, we are offered suggestions for working with stories across lessons (using longer stories); across the curriculum (ways of integrating stories into other subjects, which will be particularly relevant for CLIL teachers); and across languages (for students who share the same L1). There are also more ideas on involving the students by asking them to bring in their own stories, and the collaborative creation of stories. In *Beyond the classroom*, there are suggestions for moving storytelling outdoors, online storytelling, bringing in people from the outside world to tell stories, and involvement in festivals and community events. *Joining forces* contains useful

information for teachers who want to develop their storytelling further, through peer workshops, training workshops and courses. The section concludes with a rich variety of *Sources* teachers can draw upon, including books, videos and contact details for storytellers and associations.

The stories in Part B are laid out on two facing pages, or on a single page in two columns, for ease of use – you never have to turn a page to get to the end of a story. On the left are detailed suggested procedures, notes and ideas for classroom use. These

include a brief description of the technique, rehearsal suggestions, and what to do before, while and after telling the story. Finally, there are suggestions for follow-on activities. On the right is the story (or stories) to be used.

There are 40 stories in total. They are unfailingly delightful, and draw on a wide

variety of traditions, ranging from trickster stories, Nasrudin stories, wisdom stories, folk myths and fairy stories. David Heathfield has generously shared his encyclopaedic knowledge of stories worldwide to offer us a selection of engaging story material, which he has used successfully with language students of all ages. The book is worth buying for the stories alone. But, additionally, the compendium of techniques offers teachers an indispensable toolkit for getting the best out of storytelling.

This book adds substantially to the resources available to teachers who wish to incorporate storytelling into their classes. And it reminds us of the extraordinary power of stories to engage learners and teachers alike. The world is a fabric made of stories, and each of us carries a unique network of personal stories. We should celebrate this more than we do in education – and this book will help us to do so.

Alan Maley
Fordwich, UK

Subscribers can get a 12.5% discount on this book. Go to the ETP website and quote ETPQR0314 at the checkout.

ENGLISH TEACHING professional

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SCRAPBOOK

GEMS, TITBITS, PUZZLES, FOIBLES, QUIRKS, BITS & PIECES,
QUOTATIONS, SNIPPETS, ODDS & ENDS,
WHAT YOU WILL

I recently did a shameful (or, at any rate, disloyal) thing.

I downloaded a book for my iPad! In my defence, in the first place it was free – and in the second place it was terrible, so having read three pages, I found out how to delete it from my virtual library. My virtual shelves are now virtually pristine again, ready to gather virtual dust and virtual cobwebs from virtual spiders ...

Shameful? Disloyal? Well, yes, really. You see, I love books. A number of years ago, I heard a report that suggested that something approaching 50 percent of the households in the UK have no books in them; this is a state I cannot imagine. I have bookshelves virtually (strange word, that) everywhere. Actually, the ubiquity isn't virtual at all, it's genuine: I have bookshelves in the bedrooms, in the hall, in the kitchen, in the living room and even in the 'smallest room'!

I confess to having the most rudimentary of filing systems for my beloved books, so when I am looking for a particular volume, I frequently look for the particular colour of cover, or of spine, and shape if it isn't an ordinary standard-sized paperback. I possess a fair number of hardbacks of the old cloth-bound variety, which stretch the physical bounds originally sought by Messrs Penguin and Co. And variety is what these wonderful items provide in colour, in weight, in size – even in smell! As far as size goes, there is nothing remotely like the handling of a good solid read that is some 60mm thick – wonderful!

My especial pride is my row – a complete shelf – of matching volumes of Rudyard Kipling. These marvellously disciplined soldiers all have a gorgeous embossed gold medallion on the front covers and give pleasure just by their appearance.

In praise of the book

The 'BOOK' is a revolutionary breakthrough in technology: no wires, no electric circuits, no batteries, nothing to be connected or switched on. It's so easy to use, even a child can operate it. Just lift its cover! Compact and portable, it can be used anywhere – even sitting in an armchair by the fire – yet it is powerful enough to hold as much information as a CD-ROM disc.

Here's how it works ...

Each BOOK is constructed of sequentially numbered sheets of paper (recyclable), each capable of holding thousands of bits of information. These pages are locked together with a custom-fit device called a binding, which keeps the sheets in their correct sequence. Opaque Paper Technology (OPT) allows manufacturers to use both sides of the sheet, doubling the information density and cutting costs in half. Experts are divided on the prospects for further increases in information density; for now, BOOKS with more information simply use more pages. This makes them thicker and harder to carry, and has drawn some criticism from the mobile computing crowd. Each sheet is scanned optically, registering information directly into your brain. A flick of the finger takes you to the next sheet. The BOOK may be taken up at any time and used by merely opening it. The BOOK never crashes and never needs rebooting, though, like other display devices, it can become unusable if dropped overboard. The 'browse' feature allows you to move instantly to

any sheet, and move forward or backward as you wish. Many come with an 'index' feature, which pinpoints the exact location of any selected information for instant retrieval.

An optional 'BOOKmark' accessory allows you to open the BOOK to the exact place you left it in a previous session – even if the BOOK has been closed. BOOKmarks fit universal design standards; thus, a single BOOKmark can be used in BOOKS by various manufacturers.

Conversely, numerous BOOKmarks can be used in a single BOOK if the user wants to store numerous views at once. The number is limited only by the number of pages in the BOOK.

The medium is ideal for long-term archive use. Several field trials have proven that it will still be readable in several centuries, and because of its simple user interface it will be compatible with future reading devices.

You can also make personal notes next to BOOK text entries with optional programming tools, the Portable Erasable Nib Cryptic Intercommunication Language Stylus (Pencils). Portable, durable and affordable, the BOOK is being hailed as the entertainment wave of the future. The BOOK's appeal seems so certain that thousands of content creators have committed to the platform. Look for a flood of new titles soon.

Marielle Carter (Executive Director, Alliance for Canada's Audio-Visual Heritage)

Book quotes

'It's an iPad made of trees, dear.'

Parent to child, curious about the book she is reading

'The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.'

St Augustine

'If I had a dollar for every time that I felt more emotion for a fictional character than for people in real life, I could pay for the psychiatric help that I so obviously need.'

Anon

'Reading won't solve your problems. But neither will housework ...'

Anon

'I once read part of a book all the way through.'

'Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend – inside of a dog it's too dark to read.'

Groucho Marx

Snow-covered sign outside a bookshop:
Cold? Check out a book. You'll still be cold, but you'll have a book.

Book trivia

There is much dispute about the longest book, but a serious contender for the title of the longest 'proper' book must be 'À la recherche du temps perdu' (*Remembrance of Things Past*), Proust's most prominent work. This novel is famous both for its length, (1,500,000 words) and its author's concept of involuntary memory. (I would think that memory might be a problem with this length of book – *War and Peace* is taxing enough at a third of the length.)

One of the most curious books is a 50,000-word novel called *Gadsby*. Written by Ernest Vincent Wright in 1939, it never uses the letter 'E'; quite a feat, given how often this letter occurs in normal writing.

Hidden treasures

In a large country house in Norfolk, UK, the light switches in the library are hidden behind hinged panels, which are fronted with leather-bound spines so as to look like filled bookshelves. It is only when you look closely at the titles that you realise that all is not as it seems:

Lamb on the Death of Wolfe

Pygmalion by Lord Bacon

McAdam's views on Rhodes

Chronological Account of the Date Tree

Recollections of Bannister by Lord Stair

Cursory Remarks on Swearing

A novel of eerie prescience

The novella *Futility*, written in 1898 by an American, Morgan Robertson, shows some striking similarities to the story of the sinking of the *Titanic*:

- In *Futility*, the ship was called the *Titan*, and, like the *Titanic*, it was described as the largest ship of its day.
- Both the *Titan* and the *Titanic* were practically identical in size, differing only by 25 metres.
- Both ships were described as 'unsinkable'.
- Both hit an iceberg and sank in the middle of April.
- Both were capable of speeds of more than 20 knots.
- Despite having thousands of passengers on board, both ships carried the bare legal minimum number of lifeboats.

Although these comparisons are unsettling, *Titanic* scholar Paul Heyer explains that the author was an experienced seaman and someone who wrote about maritime affairs. He saw the trend for ships being built ever larger, and he recognised the danger that one of these behemoths might one day hit an iceberg.

There is a literary treasure hunt on page 48 that you might like to use with your students. Encourage them to use the internet to find any answers they don't know, and to give brief presentations in groups or to the whole class of the information they discover for the research questions.

- Answers**
- 1A a) *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens
b) *Peter Pan* by J M Barrie
c) *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury
d) *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
e) 1984 by George Orwell
f) *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy
g) *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J K Rowling
h) *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville
- 2A (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_most_expensive_books)
1 a) \$21.3m; 2 f) \$11.5m; 3 c) \$7.5m;
4 d) \$6.1m; 5 b) \$4.9m; 6 h) \$3.98m;
7 e) \$1.9m; 8 g) \$1.4m
- 3A 1 Woody Allen
2 Eric Blair
3 Isak Dinesen
4 Charlotte Brontë
5 Mark Twain
6 William Porter
7 Voltaire
8 Helen Lyndon Goff
9 Lewis Carroll
10 Benjamin Franklin
- 4A A Room with a View (E M Forster)
Catch 22 (Joseph Heller)
Macbeth (William Shakespeare)
The War of the Worlds (H G Wells)
The Jungle Book (Rudyard Kipling)
A Passage to India (E M Forster)
Snow Falling on Cedars (David Guterson)
Lord of the Flies (William Golding)
Great Expectations (Charles Dickens)
Emma (Jane Austen)



Literary treasure hunt

Each exercise has two parts. The first part is a series of questions for you to answer; the second part asks you to do some further research. You can use the internet for both parts.

1

A Here are the first lines of some famous novels.

What are the titles of the novels and who wrote them?

- It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ...
- All children, except one, grow up.
- It was a pleasure to burn.
- It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.
- It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.
- All happy families are alike, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.
- Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number 4, Privet Drive, were proud to say they were perfectly normal, thank you very much.
- Call me Ishmael.

B Choose one of these activities and make a short presentation to the class.

- Find out one more fact about each book.
- Choose one of the books and write a brief summary of the plot.

2

A Place these (very) expensive books and documents in order of the amount paid for them at auction (1 = the most expensive).

- Magna Carta* (1297)
- The Gutenberg Bible* (c1455)
- The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (first printed edition, 1478)
- Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies: First Folio* (1623)
- US Declaration of Independence* (signed manuscript, 1776)
- The Birds of America* by John James Audubon (c1838)
- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll (1865)
- The Tales of Beedle the Bard* by J K Rowling (2007)

B Work in groups of five. Each choose one of the books in the list in A. This is now your book and you want to sell it at auction. Try to convince the other members of your group that they ought to buy it.

3

A Many authors, for various reasons, used 'pen names' rather than using their real names. Can you complete this table?

Pen name	Real name
1 _____	Allen Konigsberg
2 George Orwell	_____
3 _____	Karen Blixen
4 Currer Bell	_____
5 _____	Samuel Clemens
6 O Henry	_____
7 _____	François-Marie Arouet
8 P L Travers	_____
9 _____	Charles Dodgson
10 Alice Addertongue	_____

B Choose two of the writers in the list in A and find out what they wrote.

4

A These book titles aren't quite right – see if you can find the correct ones. The authors' initials are given to help you.

Clue: They have all been made into films.

- A Room with a Bath* (EMF)
Catch 101 (JH)
Macduff (WS)
The War of the Girls (HGW)
The Woodland Book (RK)
A Passage to Woking (EMF)
Snow Smelling of Cedars (DG)
Lord of the Pies (WG)
Great Fascinations (CD)
Gemma (JA)

B Work in groups. Think of some more famous books in English. Change the titles slightly and give them to other groups to solve (include the authors' initials).

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What do you mean by that?

John Davis proposes building bridges by building language.

"When young people are asked 'What are you interested in?' they answer that they are interested in justice: they want justice for the races, they want justice for the nations of the world. But if you ask 'Well, what is justice?' they haven't any idea."

Robert M Hutchins, Yale University

Many hundreds of years ago, in the early days of the exploration of America, a traveller would have faced a daunting linguistic challenge. The continent was massive. It included vast areas of mountain and desert, enormous grasslands and dense green forests. Over 500 different native tribes populated the hills, valleys and plains. Yet it was possible to travel and be understood, even then. There was a common sign language, which was known to all, so that simple communication could take place.

As philologists, we understand how important this is, for without communication, there is no hope for

dialogue, and without dialogue, there is no hope of understanding the world as the other person sees it. If we can't do that, we cannot begin to build bridges. Why do we want to do this? Without bridges we never know what that person on the other side of the river thinks, believes or loves. We cannot ever really understand them, or they us, and so can never really work toward common goals. A bridge doesn't make us the same, but it helps us cross the river that divides us.

Beginning

So where do we begin? Consider this: to truly have a dialogue with other people, it is important to know what is important to them. We have to know what certain important words mean to our foreign counterparts. No one wants cultural or linguistic imperialism, which is based on the false assumption that you think just like me and understand certain words just as I do. How can we reach a true understanding of someone else, while at the same time allowing that person to learn what is true about us? For only in such a way can we work toward mutual understanding, friendship, reconciliation and the greatest goal of all: peace.

In the early 1990s, my wife taught a course in English as a Second Language. In the class was a young woman who had come to the US from a former Communist country to be an *au pair* for an American family. But that job was only the means that brought her to the States; it was not why she really came. She came because she had seen the movie *Dances With Wolves*, and she wanted to see for herself the immense, remarkable land she had seen on the screen. America was a land where endless prairies and giant buffalo herds still existed. She wanted to meet the people that lived in such a place, and get to know them and understand them. This is really why she came, because she had a dream to understand America, and Americans.

Progressing

We, as students of languages, know that in order to progress, it is necessary first to understand the basics. Of course, we must first understand verb forms, sentence structure, idiomatic expressions and grammar. Yet once we have accomplished that, where do we go? How can we truly understand the people, the basics of whose native

language we have just mastered? Do we ever find ourselves asking questions such as *'In this country do they mean justice in the same way that we do?'*

I suggest that a new form of language training can help here. It would cost nothing, but it would be a true gift to new arrivals, students, aspiring citizens or simply travellers who come and hope to learn something of the land and people they are visiting. How does this idea work? I maintain that we can teach what is fundamentally important to the people of any nation by teaching the language associated with that country's citizenship requirements. Here, we will consider the case of American English, but this idea could be applied equally to any language, taught anywhere.

Understanding

If you hear the word *English*, you may think of *England*. Yet we Americans speak English, the Irish speak English, the Canadians speak English, the Australians speak English. We are all quite different. I contend that for travellers to understand a people, they must first discover what is important to them, why they are different. Yet what exactly does that mean? And how do we discover this?

I suggest that in order to understand the American personality, someone needs to understand why we are Americans, and not people from some other country. How do we know the difference? What is *American*, rather than *Canadian*, *British* or *West Indian*? Just as our accents or our idioms distinguish us from each other, so too does our heritage. Now we are no longer talking about grammar, sentence structure and spelling – we are talking about ideas. To learn these, it is important to advance in our study of the language of a given culture. It is at this level that my language proposal becomes significant.

Building

When I lived in the Netherlands, one of the gifts that country offered a visitor was free language training. They understood that the easiest way to learn about a country was to learn its language. The goal was to provide the basis to begin communicating.

When I learnt German, my professor would invite me to lunch, open a German lexicon and say 'Point'. I would point at some subject at random, and we would talk about that theme throughout lunch. The goal was to expand my

vocabulary. I specifically recall talking about penguins, about Ethiopia, about killer whales, even tattoos. Of course, I must admit there was little opportunity to speak on these subjects in my later life, though I tried my best to bring them up at every occasion!

So to my proposal. What if we combined the goal of learning English with the hope of building bridges? What if, at the very beginning of language

training, we were to say: *'You may learn what makes us Americans'*? To do this, I propose we incorporate the questions in our American citizenship test into our language training. With these questions as the basis for learning vocabulary, we would also be creating the basis for learning who we Americans are.

Imagine that you are teaching or taking an American-English language class. These questions could be themes

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

A Principles of American Democracy

What is the supreme law of the land?

Answer: The Constitution

*A: declared our independence
(from Great Britain)*

What does the Constitution do?

A: sets up the government

A: defines the government

A: protects the basic rights of Americans

*A: said that the United States is free
(from Great Britain)*

The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution.

What are these words?

A: We the People

What are rights in the Declaration of Independence?

A: life

A: liberty

A: the pursuit of happiness

What is an amendment?

A: a change (to the Constitution)

A: an addition (to the Constitution)

What is freedom of religion?

A: You can practise any religion, or not practise a religion.

A: There is no state religion in America; we cannot have a state religion.

What do we call the first ten amendments to the Constitution?

A: The Bill of Rights

What did the Declaration of Independence do?

*A: announced our independence
(from Great Britain)*

What is the 'rule of law'?

A: Everyone must follow the law.

A: Leaders must obey the law.

A: Government must obey the law.

A: No one is above the law.

B System of Government

Name one branch or part of the government.

A: Congress

A: legislative

A: President

A: executive

A: courts

A: judicial

A: freedom to petition the government

A: freedom of worship

A: the right to bear arms

What stops one branch of government from becoming too powerful?

A: checks and balances

A: separation of powers

What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?

A: vote

A: join a political party

A: campaign

A: join a civic group

A: join a community group

A: give an elected official their opinion on an issue

A: Representatives

A: publicly support or oppose an issue or policy

A: run for office

A: write to a newspaper

What are two rights of everyone living in the United States?

A: freedom of expression

A: freedom of speech

A: freedom of assembly

What do you mean by that?



for discussion, not only about the language as such but also, and more importantly, what makes us Americans. On page 51 are some of the actual questions from the new American naturalisation test.

With this as a basis of American-English language study, imagine the great strides students will take toward understanding how Americans think. They will understand what some significant words mean for Americans and will be able to discuss those themes that make them who they are. This is important for any translator, diplomat or informed traveller to know.

Or you could consider some of the historical questions in the test, and imagine again what avenues this discussion would open up:

Name one problem that led to the American Civil War.

A: slavery

A: economic reasons

A: states' rights

What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?

A: freed the slaves

A: freed slaves in the Confederacy

A: freed slaves in the Confederate states

A: freed slaves in most Southern states

What did Susan B Anthony do?

A: fought for women's rights

A: fought for civil rights

Name two national US holidays.

A: New Year's Day

A: Martin Luther King Day

A: Presidents' Day

A: Memorial Day

A: Independence Day

A: Labor Day

A: Columbus Day

A: Veterans Day

A: Thanksgiving Day

A: Christmas Day

Discussions along these lines would lead naturally to observations about what Americans celebrate, why and how. How Americans celebrate would in turn lead to lively conversations about what we consider part of our lives, such as the sports of baseball and American football, music like jazz, rock and roll and folk music. Once someone completes the advanced American English class, they would have a good working knowledge not only of who these Americans are, but what is important to them.



Any country could do this with their language, or languages. In other words, this same idea could be applied to learn what it takes to become a Kazakh, a Pole or a member of any other land; the study of any language should address how one becomes a citizen of the country where it is spoken. We can understand people from different countries by learning about the ideas that are important to them through learning how they understand different words. What better way is there to understand someone than to know what is meant by their concepts of the right, the good, the true and the beautiful? Language classes which address these issues help to build bridges. These bridges help take away misunderstandings that might lead to difficulties. We can always walk over a bridge and ask for clarification, but the bridge has to be there to enable us to do this.

A good place to start, then, is to learn the language associated with the national requirements for citizenship. With such a knowledgeable basis for dialogue, we can begin to build understanding and peace. And if you know how to bring peace, you are very rich indeed. **ETp**



John W. Davis retired from US Government service as a linguist and counterintelligence officer. He has learnt five languages and continues to seek methods to make language study part of international bridge building. He lives in Athens, Alabama, with his wife Jane, near his three grown-up sons.

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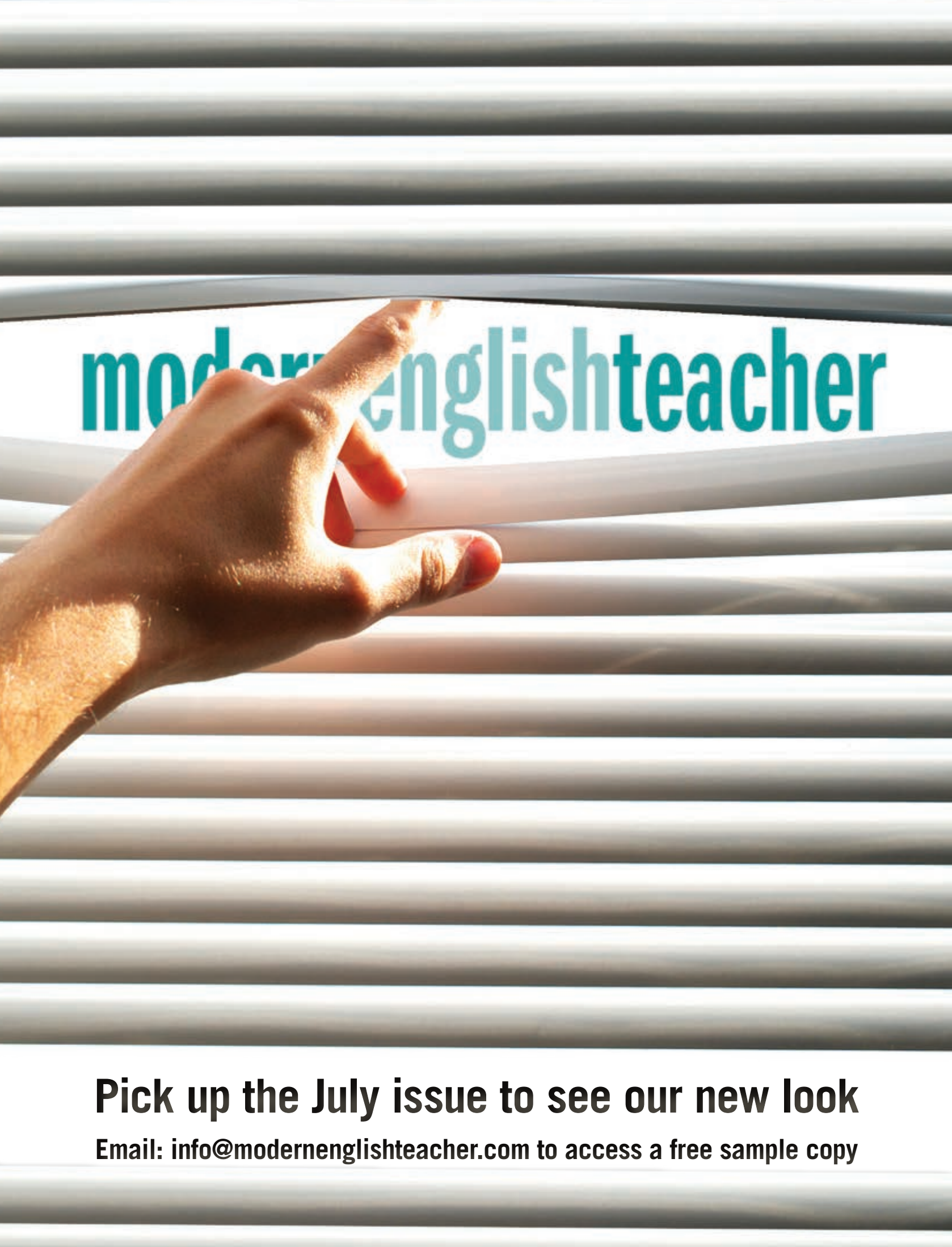
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A hand is visible on the left side of the frame, with the index finger pointing towards the text. The background consists of horizontal white window blinds. The text 'modernenglishteacher' is written in a teal, sans-serif font across the middle of the image, partially obscured by the blinds and the hand.

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TAKE FIVE

Chaz Pugliese poses five questions to people involved in the world of ELT. In this issue, he talks to Silvana Richardson.

Silvana Richardson is Head of Teacher Development at Bell Educational Services and Director of Studies at Bell Teacher Campus, Cambridge, UK.

1 Silvana, what is your main challenge as a teacher educator?

Resistance to learning and trying new things is a powerful barrier that I have often encountered working with teachers. After having done research on teacher resistance to learning for a considerable time, I've only managed to scratch its surface; and while I feel I have a better understanding of the phenomenon as a result, I have to admit I'm none the wiser about concrete strategies to help teacher trainees work through their resistances.

2 What do you think teacher trainees expect of their trainer?

I think this largely depends on two factors: the individual teacher trainee's cultural and educational history, and where they are at this moment in their career development. A trainee's cultural and educational background informs their expectations of their trainer. For example, trainees who come from national cultures where there is a high propensity towards avoiding uncertainty and an acceptance and expectation that power between those who teach and those who learn is unequal – what the Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede calls a high 'power distance' – might expect their trainer to be an expert authority figure, able to provide prescriptive direction, information and unambiguous guidance. Trainees from cultures where there is more tolerance of uncertainty, and where power relations are more democratic, however, might be more comfortable with a trainer who is confident in saying 'I don't know', and who invites consultation, exploration, welcomes complexity and encourages the trainees to find their own answers to questions.

The developmental stage in a particular trainee's career also influences their expectations of their trainer. For example, many trainees in initial teacher education programmes expect clarity, direction, concrete models, validation and reassurance from their trainers, while more experienced teachers often expect trainers to offer them a broader range of

techniques, strategies and activities so that they can refresh their own established practices. I have also found that more experienced teachers often have strong beliefs about what works and what doesn't for them, so they expect trainers to respect those beliefs and to *suggest* rather than to *impose* alternative ways of working.

3 Imagine the ELT profession in ten years' time. What lies down the road, do you think?

In ten years' time we will be better informed about the real impact of learning technologies, by which I don't just mean, for example, apps and games on tablets and mobile phones, but the application of a broad range of communication, information and related technologies: how to use these efficiently and effectively to support and enhance learning, teaching and assessment. I believe we will be better informed about the impact, not just on educational outcomes, but also on the social and emotional dimensions as well as the cognitive or linguistic. This evidence-based understanding will, hopefully, inform a more discerning and critical adoption of educational technologies that have a positive contribution to make to teaching and learning in the field of ELT. This, in turn, might mean that we will hopefully be less fascinated with the 'bling': the bandwagons and the empty promises that have not delivered.

4 What changes have you noticed since you started working in teacher education?

Regarding teacher education itself, I think we have a better understanding of the learning needs of teachers at different points in their careers. When I started working in teacher education in the early 1990s, the notion of differentiation did not exist as such. Teachers and trainers have since then become more aware that we don't just teach a homogeneous class, but that we teach different students or trainees

in a class, with different needs, preferences and learning or teaching histories. New approaches, movements and memes have emerged since I started teaching teachers – for example, TBL, the Lexical Approach, CLIL, Dogme ELT, Demand High, etc – but in terms of actual classroom practice, I'm not entirely convinced that as a profession we have radically changed the way we work. In terms of technology, back then the most sophisticated piece of equipment was the VCR, so teachers and trainers have had to learn to use new technologies, such as the IWB, virtual learning environments, mobile devices, social media for teaching and learning, etc. With the advent of Web 2.0, there has been an explosion of materials and resources which have become much easier and cheaper to access, produce, share and curate; so in terms of choice, we are in a completely different place now. The impact of this democratisation and availability of information is a crisis in the image of the trainer as the 'oracle of sources'. In the past, teacher trainees used to look to their trainers to recommend books to read, teaching materials, etc. Now it is often the case that the trainees are as *au fait* with materials, sources and resources as the trainers are – if not more so!

5 What are you working on at present?

For years I have believed that the INSETT model, where all the teachers in a school, regardless of their expertise, beliefs and experiences, sit in the same room at the same time to learn the same content in the same way, is an ineffective anachronism, so I'm working on a framework that allows the teachers to be in the driving seat of their CPD, and that enables them to learn what they need and want to learn at their own pace and in their own time, using the approaches and working modes that suit their learning preferences.

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The Fair List, UK

Tessa Woodward provides an update on her campaign for gender equality.

In Issue 88 of *ETp*, I wrote about the learning I was doing as I started up The Fair List, an annual award for excellence in the achievement of gender balance in plenary speakers, presenters or speaker panels at ELT events in the UK. I listed several useful steps for anybody starting up a campaign, whether it is, for example, to improve the lot of teachers whose mother tongue is not English, or that of students with dyslexia or visual impairment. It was basic, important stuff like:

- Analyse why you feel the way you do. Then think of a single, positive, simple, doable step you can take to ameliorate the situation you feel is unfair or unfortunate.
- Give it a catchy name.
- Explore the idea with as many friends and colleagues as you can, so that it becomes clearer and more realistic.
- Build an email list of those interested, and keep in contact with your support group as you go along. They will keep you 'real'.
- Read on the topic to learn more, to see it from different angles and also to see if anybody is already doing what you want to do.

Phase 1

As well as doing the learning above, I might have been doing a bit of fearing, too! I have never felt comfortable about being at the front of something like a march or a rally. I wasn't sure what sort of reaction I was going to get. But I should have had faith in the beautiful profession we are in. That first year, 2013, we had our first awards ceremony at the IATEFL conference in Liverpool, our website was launched at www.thefairlist.org and we had nothing but supportive messages, with people passing on the news that we existed on the various lists and networks that they belong to.

People sent in their names and photos to be added to the website. Every month, a new post went up on issues, organisations, books and events related to public speaking and women. So Phase 1

of this lively venture is now, happily, very successfully completed. I shouldn't have worried – I should have remembered that, in the world of education, most people do want you to succeed.

Phase 2

So, is it 'game over'? Mission completed? No, this is where my new learning starts!

Anybody working on a vision for something, a campaign of some kind, will know that you can get so involved with the practical side of short-term aims – the details of emailing, writing articles, contacting people, booking rooms, organising events, setting up a website, blogging, and so on – that you can lose sight of where you want to go next. You can forget then to lift your eyes to the horizon and see further, think broader. So the next bullet point in the 'To do' list should have been this one:

- Take time to sit with people who have themselves walked a similar road, maybe further, and under more difficult circumstances. Listen to what they have to say. Then try to do it!

How do you find such people? Well, in my own case, either supporters said 'You should go and talk to X. She's terrific!' or I just contacted people I had tremendous respect for – for what they had achieved and for their independence and integrity. I screwed up my courage and asked for a little of their time. And, being excellent people, they were kind enough to give me some. Meeting them (however, wherever and whenever was possible for them), I would tell them what I wanted to achieve, hear myself describing this, then listen to what they had to suggest. Of course, some of what people say is not quite relevant. Or so I thought at the time. But I scribbled it down anyway. And some of what they said seemed way past what I thought was achievable at the time. But that is the whole point of a vision. It is way beyond what you normally see.

So, here are some of the things I am now learning about, as a result of some mind-expanding conversations with mentors:

- Attracting sponsorship and partners in enterprise
- Thinking about the next generation (in the case of The Fair List, UK, this is of women plenary and keynote speakers)
- Thinking about the long-term sustainability of the campaign
- Organising webinars and other events
- Involving supporters more fully
- Entering competitions for awards
- Checking the language and spirit of the campaign to make sure it always reflects what you believe

And we are beginning to get results: At the time of writing, The Fair List, UK has just been short-listed for a British Council ELTONs award. The IATEFL Leadership and Management Special Interest Group is putting on a webinar in September 2014 – 'Preparing for your first keynote talk or plenary' – aimed especially at women who are thinking about dipping their toes in these waters for the first time.



Are you a woman who would like to increase your profile in the ELT world? Can you see yourself delivering a keynote speech or plenary, now or at some time in the future? Would you like to get in contact with other women in your position? Why not join the webinar on September 13th 2014 at 15.00 BST (UTC +1) and take your first steps? See <http://llamsig.iatefl.org/events/webinars> for details. Sign-up details will be announced there nearer the time. **ETp**



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From TEFL certificate to work contract

Sean Lords makes sure we don't miss out on overseas teaching opportunities.

Hundreds of job postings each week offer language teachers the opportunity to work abroad. From the exotic beaches of Fiji to the snowy mountainside villages of rural Korea, the options to teach abroad are many and varied. With so many different destinations to choose from, making a decision about which job to apply for can seem slightly overwhelming.

But, before you can decide where you want to go, book your ticket and pack your bags, most educational institutions will require that you have taken and passed a teacher training course. Once completed, this certification can be your golden ticket, unlocking opportunities that you wouldn't otherwise have had.

Choosing your course

Choose your course carefully

The internet is a valuable resource when you are choosing which teacher training course to take. Because of the prevalence of online forums and sites like Dave's ESL Café, you should never have to play the guessing game when trying to find the best course. Don't forget to look for what people are saying about any of the schools you are interested in. If the school has bad reviews from teachers, perhaps you should consider a different one.

Check their job placement services

One indicator of a great TEFL training institution is its ability to place you directly into employment or supply you with a list of schools that will be interested in hiring you. When you choose a course, therefore, make sure you enquire about the avenues to employment the institution offers *before* you've enrolled.

This can be done via the institution's website, by email or through direct contact with an employee. Ask what services they offer to their graduates. Follow this up by finding out how many of their graduates find employment directly after the completion of the course.

Communicate with a real person

The importance of interpersonal communication cannot be stressed enough. When you are applying for a teaching course, always make sure you are dealing with a real person. Never hand over any money for any course without talking to a representative first. In fact, most training institutes will supply a list of graduates who have agreed to be contacted. Take advantage of this resource, email the people on the list, even check out their *Facebook* pages. Take every step you can to ensure the course you are about to enroll on is a valuable allocation of your time and money.

Preparing your resume

Highlight your TEFL course

When you have finished your training course, you will need to produce a resume to send to potential employers. Your resume is a reflection of your character, your skills and your abilities, so keep it fresh and simple. Loading it up with whimsical fonts, red bolded lines and underlines, and an exhaustive list of your personal achievements, will not get you very far with employers.

Instead, keep your resume modest. List the educational establishments you attended and perhaps one or two of your achievements there. Highlight your TEFL course and any valuable information that you think would appeal to an employer at a school. Attaching page after page of personal statements,

letters of interests and covering letters can make you appear too needy and may raise unnecessary eyebrows.

Highlight your TEFL skills

Pay careful attention to the information that you put down. While it's always great to show an employer that you have a steady work history, remember that you are applying for a job overseas. This means that the rules of the game might not be the same.

Instead of listing your year-long stint as a barista at Starbucks, consider adding some more information about the teaching skills and curriculum design you developed during your TEFL course. Information that falls outside the realm of education is likely to appear irrelevant or off-topic to potential employers. **ETP**



After obtaining degrees in English Literature and English Secondary Education in the USA, Sean Lords packed his bags and left for Seoul, South Korea, where he lived and taught for three years. He has since returned to the US and is currently at work on his Master's degree.

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International collaboration

David Dry and Anastasia Reva describe a personal experience in using a wiki to promote cultural understanding.

The full potential of wikis to help students use English with native speakers, gain intercultural insights and share knowledge about their own cultures has not been fully explored and documented in the same way that it has for collaboration within a single classroom of EFL learners. This article aims to redress the balance and examine further some of the benefits and practical aspects of fostering an intercultural exchange between classrooms in different countries. This added intercultural dimension creates an extra layer of complexity, requiring more extensive planning and coordination, but it offers much greater learning opportunities for the students. The world is becoming increasingly interconnected, and our students need the ability to interact with members of different cultures. They must be able to understand culturally diverse individuals in order to interpret their actions properly, respond appropriately, collaborate and work outside their own cultural milieu.

Our project

Anastasia teaches English to a class of history students at the Volzhsky Institute of Humanities in Russia. These students wanted a real intercultural exchange, so they created a *Wikispaces* page to document their studies, interests and participation in archaeological digs. Anastasia then set about locating an instructor and class to partner with in the United States, using a website called *epals.com*, which works to bring together educators from across the world for collaborative projects. An instructor can send a message through *epals* to another

instructor if it looks as if the goals and objectives of the two are aligned. She found David, who teaches ancient and medieval world history at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College in the United States.

First, we each considered what types of students we wanted to collaborate with and defined our individual goals and aims for undertaking collaborative work. Both of us created a profile and wrote an introduction for the *epals.com* site, describing our teaching situation and the type of project we wanted to engage in. When we saw that our goals and aims matched, we established contact. It is very important at this stage to get acquainted with the other educator on a personal level, as the project is much more likely to be successful when you work with an instructor you know and trust. Cross-cultural understanding starts first with the instructors coming to understand each other and their respective cultural backgrounds.

While the specific objectives of our two classes were different, they shared the common goals of increasing intercultural understanding, confronting stereotypes and discussing mutual interests: history and archaeology.

These are the basic circumstances of how we came to start our collaboration in the autumn of 2013. This article uses our own personal experience to explain the process and the intercultural benefits of creating a sustainable international class collaboration using wikis.

Our experience

Our initial wiki-based collaboration (see www.historyforenglish.wikispaces.com) has now expanded to include multiple

classes and it has spanned multiple semesters. In the process, we have developed a number of principles which we have concluded are paramount in fostering intercultural understanding.

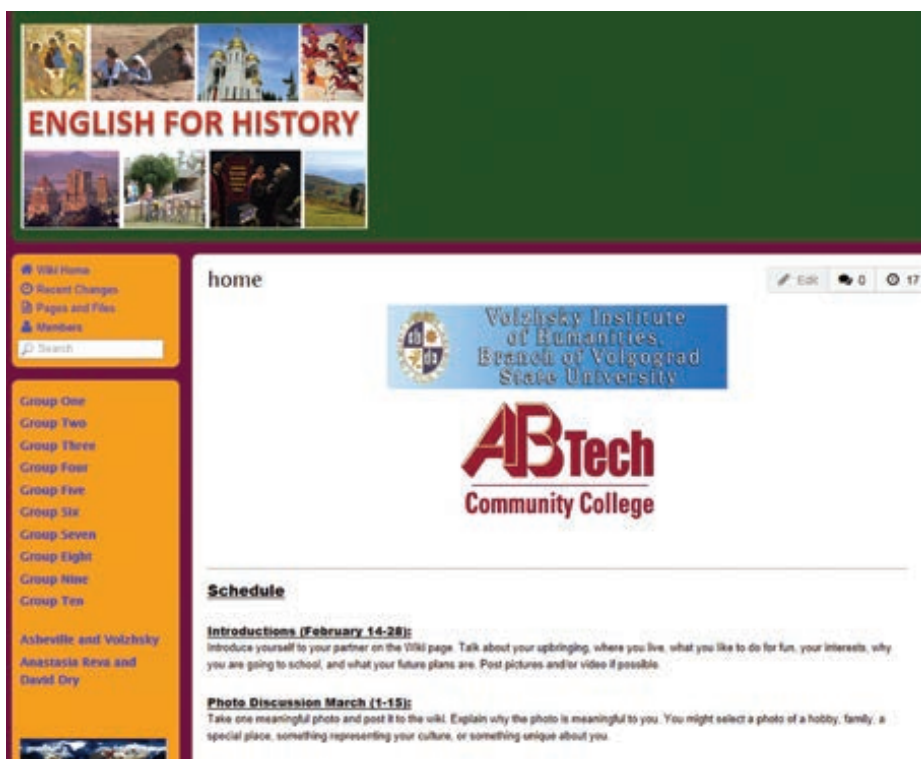
1 The most essential element at all stages of the project is communication. While there are many design features which can be incorporated into the wiki to encourage the students to be more active and responsive, the communication starts with the two instructors wanting to undertake the collaboration and working together to design the project. In addition to corresponding by email, we recommend that you use chat boxes or video conferencing for communicating with your partner and planning the project.

2 In terms of basic planning, it is vital to define the timeframe for the collaboration, taking into consideration the dates of holidays. If you are collaborating with a class from another hemisphere or culture, their semesters and vacations are unlikely to coincide with yours.

3 You cannot start planning too early! It is best to have most, if not all, of the project planned out in advance of the semester. Both instructors should agree on a detailed schedule, setting out tasks for the students and the dates by which they will be expected to complete these tasks and post the results. Be sure to keep in touch with your colleague in order to make any necessary changes to the plan. The wiki will also take time to construct and for both members to feel comfortable using it, especially if this is your first time with a wiki.

4 It may also be important to establish clearly from the outset that English is not the native language of some of the students, and to ensure your collaborator is prepared to ask their students to be patient.

5 Find a way to organise the students and their work in a style that suits the nature of the project and facilitates cooperation and participation. We chose to divide our students into groups, creating discussion pages on the wiki for each group and giving them discussion prompts with clear due dates to guide their interactions. The prompts included an introduction and discussions on cultural stereotypes, archaeological excavations and selected topics from



Russian history (studied by both groups). This design not only helped to focus the students' discussions on meaningful topics but, on a practical level, having them working in groups also increased the likelihood that even if one student failed to post (as students too often do), someone from within the group would post – ensuring that their counterparts in the other country had at least one foreign partner to respond to. Working in groups also served to show the students the diversity of viewpoints within what they often viewed as a homogenous culture; it helped to counter their often simplistic understanding of cultural difference and their failure to recognise both diversity and commonality within a culture. As the students started to get to know one another, the complexity of each foreign culture became more apparent.

It is a good idea to add in clock-widgets showing the time zone differences. This is easily done and helps the students to plan times to meet and discuss.

6 Creating a framework to discuss items more informally helps the students to build personal relationships. However, a wiki page can only be edited by one individual at a time, and this doesn't allow for synchronous discussion – or at least not easily. To overcome this deficiency, we embedded chat boxes on the students' group discussion pages, in our case using *chatango.com*, though

there are many different options for creating such a feature. Although our class times did not allow for live-chatting, the chat boxes gave the students the option to meet and chat in their own time and, in addition, allowed them to leave messages and pose questions outside the formal discussion. The chat boxes provided an opportunity for more informal communication, which might otherwise have been lost if the students had only answered the formal discussion prompts. Often, without the students' even realising it, it helped them form lasting relationships and understand the mindset of their foreign counterparts. This is good preparation for their future careers, as interactions in the business world are just as likely to be undertaken in an informal manner as they are to be highly structured.

7 Whatever the format of the students' communication, in order for it to be effective in promoting cross-cultural understanding, it has to be both meaningful and honest. We decided to initiate a discussion in which the students shared cultural stereotypes. It was decided that in the course of this discussion, the instructors would not try to control the students. The students were encouraged to share both positive and negative stereotypes and the debate became very heated. As a result, an exchange of emails proved necessary to apologise for the students because it was

International collaboration

apparent that both Russians and Americans do have a lot of stereotypes about each other. As the discussion became more intense, new pages on the wiki were created, allowing the students to broaden the discussion beyond their individual groups. We were surprised that our adult students embraced so many stereotypes, but we felt it was a positive experience. As Margaret McLaren says: *'The best way of avoiding stereotyping is to get to know individuals.'* This is echoed by Gary Oddou and Mark Mendenhall, who argue that *'if we do not know people personally, we are more likely to form inaccurate stereotypes'*. A wiki-based international collaboration can provide the context in which students can work with foreign counterparts to acquire the cultural competence needed for the new global marketplace and to engage meaningfully with entrenched cultural stereotypes. According to Rosina Chia, Elmer Poe and Karl Wuensch, international class collaborations have a proven effect in decreasing xenophobia and isolationist attitudes. Furthermore, Karen Kimmel and Simone Volet maintain that by challenging the students' understanding of the world, cross-cultural collaborations have been shown to be *'highly complex, socially and emotionally demanding'* experiences, where the success of a project is *'sensitive to the contextual conditions in which the actual encounter occurs'*. This discussion was one of the most meaningful for both groups as it challenged the students to reexamine their own beliefs in light of different perspectives. While all instructors have different individual objectives, based on the subject matter they teach, it is advisable to try to use some of the discussions to highlight the changing nature of societies, and to promote the notion that cultures, and the individuals within them, are not static entities but are continually shaped and reshaped by time and events. This is one way to promote cross-cultural tolerance and understanding.

8 It is vital to make the content meaningful to the students, and one way of doing this is to organise discussions

around shared interests and to engage the students by bringing in different kinds of media, going beyond simple text-based communication. In our collaboration, the students' shared interest in history provided the basis for the collaboration, and assignments were constructed around this common interest. The students were encouraged to express their ideas using the full range of features offered by the wiki, and in addition to descriptive writing, some students enriched their conversations by embedding photos of archaeological digs, images from the internet and audio files. Some even posted video introductions. We also identified other things which aligned with the students' interests and course objectives, making use of the fact that we had shared holidays like New Year and Easter. This allowed us to explore some cultural and historical differences. Finally, we participated in a postcard exchange and sent some cultural items by mail. All of these means of communication increased cultural understanding and gave the students a more tangible connection to their counterparts because they were both meaningful and more dynamic than a purely text-based collaboration.



Because it can easily be set up, is free of charge, allows instructors to embed numerous outside resources, and can quickly be utilised by the students to post items and respond to them, a wiki can be a very useful tool for international class collaborations. If the project and wiki are properly designed and executed, collaborations can do a lot to promote cross-cultural understanding. For foreign language students, much of the success of an intercultural exchange can come from their new-found appreciation of their ability to use their foreign language as a way of communicating about themselves and their studies with an active, global audience. By introducing our students to the international use of English and connecting them with other speakers, we found that their motivation skyrocketed. The project gave them a real purpose to learn the language and a glimpse of the life-long benefits of international exchange through learning English.

In many ways, cultural understanding can't be learnt from a book; it needs to be experienced and

worked through. By interacting directly with their foreign peers, students can talk about difficult issues, come to understand perspectives which challenge their own, and learn to respond and react to individuals from different cultural backgrounds. While in many ways these collaborations emphasise the differences in cultures, in the end most students come away realising that our similarities outweigh our differences and that our goals and values should serve to unite rather than divide. Being able to recognise these connections and build upon them is important for the students and for the future. **E17**

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Five things you always wanted to know about copyright on the internet

(but were too afraid to ask)

In this series, **Nicky Hockly** explains aspects of technology which some people may be embarrassed to confess that they don't really understand. In this article, she explores the issue of internet copyright, Creative Commons and 'fair use'.

1 Copyright on the internet? Can't I just use whatever I find online in my classes?

The issue of copyright and the internet is a murky area. Let's say you need an image of a tiger to show your students in class. Why not just search Google Images, find what you want and then share it with your students? Unfortunately it's not that simple. Although you may be able to use and share *some* images freely, others are copyrighted, and you need to get explicit permission from the creators (and, in some cases, pay something) to use them. If you go ahead and use these copyrighted images without doing so, you are technically breaking the law.

2 So how do I know what I can and can't legally use?

Copyrighted work often has a © symbol or the words 'copyright by', to show that you cannot simply do what you like with it. This may sound scary and off-putting, but there is some good news for educators. Many works on the internet (documents and texts, images and photos, music and videos) have 'Creative Commons' licences. Creative Commons is a movement that enables creators to apply different kinds of licences to their work, allowing them to be distributed or freely shared for non-commercial purposes, adapted or remixed, or used only in their original version. Most creators like to have their work attributed to them, so this is usually a part of a Creative Commons licence. See the Creative Commons website (<http://creativecommons.org>) to explore the six types of licence currently in use, the logos used to identify each, and information on how to attribute material correctly.

3 How do I find material that has a Creative Commons licence?

Let's go back to our image of a tiger. If

you do a Google search, you will find lots of images, some clearly marked 'copyright', some not so clearly marked. Don't assume that just because an image isn't clearly marked as copyrighted, it isn't. However, the good news is that if you use Google Advanced Search (www.google.com/advanced_image_search), you can search for tiger images that *only* have Creative Commons licences, by selecting the usage rights you need as one of your search parameters. There is also a Creative Commons search engine (<http://search.creativecommons.org/>), where you can choose to search not just for images, but also for music or videos.

4 What if I want to use material with my students, but can't find anything suitable with a Creative Commons licence?

There's another handy concept for educators called 'fair use' (or 'fair dealing'), which allows you to use a small percentage of copyrighted work without getting formal permission from the creator. Fair use is limited to a number of very specific uses: news reporting and commentary, criticism and parody, research and teaching. So let's imagine you want to work on a chapter from a copyrighted book with your students. If this chapter is a small percentage of the total book (around five to ten percent is generally agreed to be the limit), then that's fine, and you can even make multiple copies of this content for your students. But before you start photocopying everything in sight, beware! One of the limits to fair use is that the content cannot be used for commercial purposes. Now, if you teach in a private language school or university, where your students are paying for classes, this, it could be argued, is for commercial use. Fair use is very unclear on this point. And what about if you want to use a

copyrighted image or video – the whole thing? It's impossible to use a small percentage of an image. Especially if this image is going somewhere public – for example, on a class blog – it's simply best to use a Creative Commons image instead (paying heed to the type of Creative Commons licence).

5 Should I tell my students about copyright?

Definitely. Knowing about copyright on the internet, and alternatives such as Creative Commons licences, is a fundamental part of being a digitally literate citizen who knows how to use the internet responsibly and legally. In fact, the classroom is the perfect place to let students of all ages know about this, especially if they need to find images, music or video for English language projects they are working on. This is the moment to teach them about Creative Commons, and help them to find (and attribute) appropriate images for their work. You, too, can model responsible behaviour by using Creative Commons images yourself (with the appropriate attribution). You could even create a class around Creative Commons, and share videos with your students (see <http://creativecommons.org/videos/>). And you can be proud of the fact that you are helping your students become more savvy internet users! 



Nicky Hockly is Director of Pedagogy of The Consultants-E, an online teacher training and development consultancy. Her most recent book is *Digital Literacies*, published by Pearson. She has published an e-book, *Webinars: A Cookbook for Educators (the-round.com)*, and is co-authoring *Going Mobile*, a book on mobile learning. She maintains a blog at www.emoderationskills.com.

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Advocates of the use of technology in ELT often cite the fact that it can facilitate autonomy and help the learners to be more independent. Sometimes, however, these concepts can be interpreted in different ways. Some technologies allow students to study independently, but don't necessarily encourage them to be more independent learners. In other words, the learner is still dependent on the material to learn. Others encourage ways of organising learning, keeping notes, records of vocabulary, etc, and these both encourage the students to manage their own learning and to be independent as learners. There isn't a totally clear distinction between the two, but the former is about having materials that allow students to learn independently of the teacher, while the latter focuses more on helping the students to develop their own learning strategies – which they could then apply to other things they want to learn, too.

VideoNot.es

This powerful tool fits more into the second category described above. It was recommended by Nik Peachey, and I think it is superb. It allows you to make notes as you watch a video from YouTube or any other online video site. The notes are time-stamped, so you can go back to a note whenever you want, click on it and you will automatically be taken back to the relevant part of the video.

I am a huge fan of history videos, and I find that this is the perfect tool for noting down dates, difficult names and events as I watch. For an example, go to <http://bit.ly/1laFy8B>. Here you will find my notes on a video on Ancient Greece. Try clicking on the timestamps and see what happens. Note: It can take a few seconds to load, so be patient! You need to click on the actual timestamps (on the left of the notes), not the notes themselves.

I always worry that my students tend to watch videos rather passively, without interacting with them. Using this tool, they can play the videos, pause them, write up their notes and continue. Afterwards, they can review their notes, click on them and listen to the related section of the video again.

How it works

You need to have a Google account to make use of VideoNot.es. All your notes will be saved onto your Google Drive (free space where you can save Google files) and they are automatically placed in one file. When you open up VideoNot.es, you paste in the URL from your target video and upload it. Don't forget to put a title as well. Click on 'Play' to watch the video and 'Pause' when you want to stop and make notes. Be patient, as there is sometimes a slight delay when you click on the buttons. Write a line of notes and press 'Enter' to move down to the next line. Once you get the hang of it, you will see that it really works well. Once you have taken your notes, click on the timestamps and the video will jump straight to that part.

Ideas for classroom use

Teaching new vocabulary

One obvious way of using this in the classroom is to ask the students to watch a particular video and simply write down the vocabulary they don't understand. You could ask them to choose

five words and to note them down when they appear in the video. Afterwards, they could check the spelling of their five words and find out what they mean. They could then click on the words and listen to them being used in the video.

Note-taking

Note-taking is a very useful skill and something the students are likely to use in their future business or university careers.

Choose a video and ask the students to listen and take notes, pausing the video where necessary and writing down only the key points. You might set a limit to the number of words or lines they can write. It is a good idea to go through one video as a class first and write notes together, so the students can learn how to look for the key points.

The students could work in groups, play a part of the video and discuss what notes they should take. I think writing notes collaboratively, with just one student sitting at the computer, would be very powerful.

Follow up these activities by asking the students to work in groups and discuss what they remember about the video. After taking notes collaboratively, they should be able to remember quite a lot.

Keeping minutes

If your students ever take part in meetings, they may be asked to keep minutes. This is quite a complex business skill, which requires recording both the names of the people and what they say. You could find a video on YouTube that shows a business meeting and ask the students to use VideoNot.es to practise taking minutes.

Working from notes

Make notes on a particular video, show the notes to the students and get them to predict what the video is about. They could do this in pairs or groups and then share their ideas with the class. Afterwards, play the video to the class, or get the students to play it in groups, to see if their predictions were correct.

Dictation

Use VideoNot.es as a dictation tool, getting the students to pause the video at intervals and write down everything they hear. What they write will be time-stamped, so it can easily be checked with the video commentary. Dictation is sometimes dismissed as an old-fashioned activity, but I find it quite useful for listening and spelling and use it myself when learning French. 

A help video on how to use VideoNot.es can be found at:
www.teachertrainingvideos.com/videonotes/index.html



Russell Stannard is the founder of www.teachertrainingvideos.com, which won a British Council ELTons award for technology. He is a freelance teacher and writer and also a NILE Associate Trainer.

Keep sending your favourite sites to Russell:
russellstannard@btinternet.com

Prize crossword 66

ETp presents the sixty-sixth in our series of prize crosswords. Once you have done it successfully, let your students have a go. Send your entry (completed crossword grid and quotation), not forgetting to include your **full name, postal address, email address and telephone number**, to Prize crossword 66, ENGLISH TEACHING *professional*, Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd, Rayford House, School Road, Hove, BN3 5JR, UK. Ten correct entries will be drawn from a hat on 10 October 2014 and the winners can choose one of these titles: *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary* or *Macmillan Phrasal Verbs*. Plus. Please indicate your choice on your entry.

MACMILLAN
DICTIONARY

VERY FREQUENT WORDS

- *** Relating to the countryside
 - *** Studying a policy or idea to decide whether it is suitable
 - *** A word used to refer to yourself
 - *** Touching a surface or object
 - *** Prepared for what is going to happen
 - *** Pale in colour
 - *** Decisions on how money is spent or invested
 - *** Used for emphasising a quality or amount
 - *** Relating to education, especially in colleges
 - *** A word used to refer to someone you are talking to
- ## FREQUENT WORDS
- ** A fair way of behaving towards people (formal)
 - ** Part at the end of an animal that can move
 - ** Feeling slightly angry or impatient
 - ** Your usual way of doing things, especially in a fixed order
 - ** Armed force that can fight at sea
 - ** Able to make changes or deal with changing situations
 - ** To give someone the enthusiasm to do something
 - ** A round piece of metal used as money
 - ** Real, rather than pretended
 - ** A large musical instrument with black and white keys
 - ** Having a good influence on someone or something
 - ** A substance in meat, eggs, etc that helps people grow

- ** A deep round container used for cooking food
 - ** Liquid from fruit or vegetables
- ## FAIRLY FREQUENT WORDS
- * To be a sign or symbol of something
 - * Very stiff thick paper
 - * An official examination of a company's financial records
 - * An animal born from its mother's body, not an egg
 - * In an unusual way that attracts attention
- ## LESS FREQUENT WORDS
- A sea creature that sticks to rocks and the bottom of ships
 - Basic software in an old type of computer that makes it work (abbreviation)
 - An internet address (abbreviation)
 - A food made from milk that has become thick and slightly sour
 - A colourless gas, used in some types of light
 - A plant that produces grain for making food or whisky
 - A memory card used in cameras and phones
 - Technology that allows you to send emails on a mobile phone (abbreviation)
 - Designed to stop things sliding or falling
 - Strange, mysterious and sometimes frightening
 - Using technology to make computers and machines act like people (abbreviation)

- Word used with *out*, meaning to get just enough money or food to be able to continue to exist
- The sound of a liquid falling in drops
- An expression of excitement, used mainly by children
- An invention or creation that no one is allowed to copy or sell (abbreviation)
- A weapon shaped like a short thick stick
- Used to describe a building that is not being used
- A religious song
- Relating to countries like Denmark, Norway, Sweden, etc
- Someone who likes to tell jokes
- Used to give a different name someone also uses (abbreviation)
- Company (abbreviation)
- Bright blue
- A long thin fish
- A sticky substance used in hair products
- A place with a natural supply of mineral water
- Used with *ad* to mean without planning or preparation
- To treat someone unfairly
- Used to describe a very cold drink
- The skin under the hair on your head
- Used in blogs to express gratitude for information received (abbreviation)
- Cloth used to cover an injury
- A rude way to attract attention
- A female sheep

20	1	12	25	1	23	18	5		5	15	19	10	3	16
5	9	5					5	26	5		25		1	10
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23	6			2	1	2	2	1	18		21		6	
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9	12	16	21	3	6	25		1	25	25	6	16	5	14
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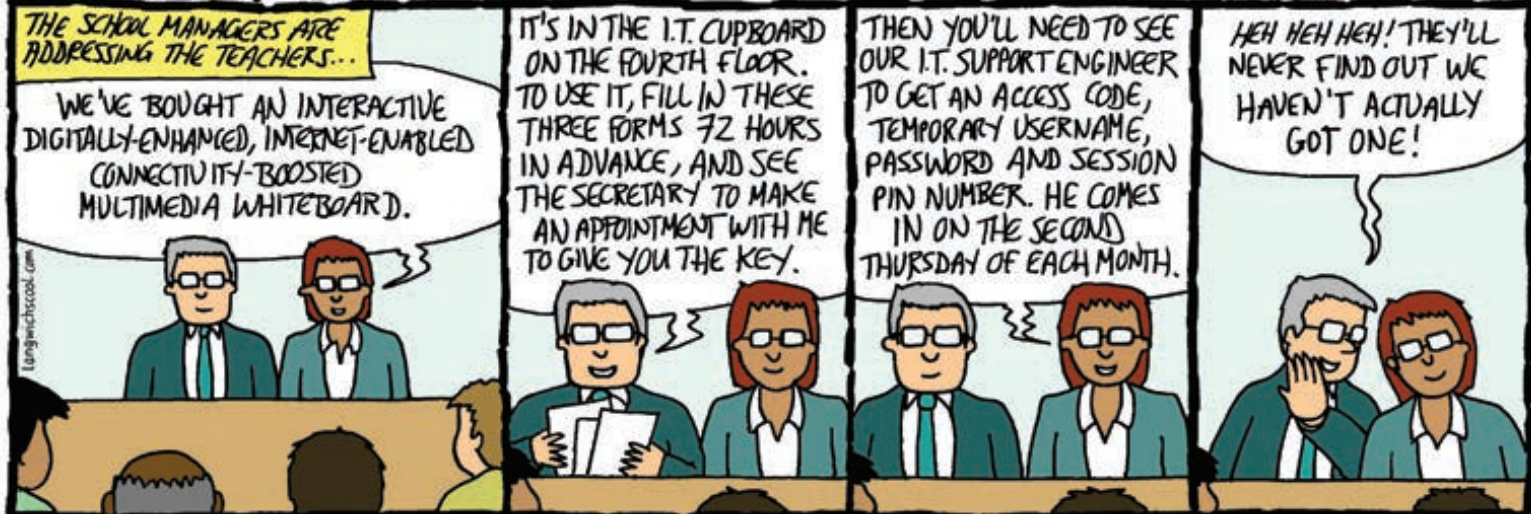
To solve the puzzle, find which letter each number represents. You can keep a record in the boxes above. The definitions of the words in the puzzle are given, but not in the right order. When you have finished, you will be able to read the quotation.

1		13	6	6	14		18	1	19	13	24		10	4		4	19	25	4	24
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William Makepeace Thackeray

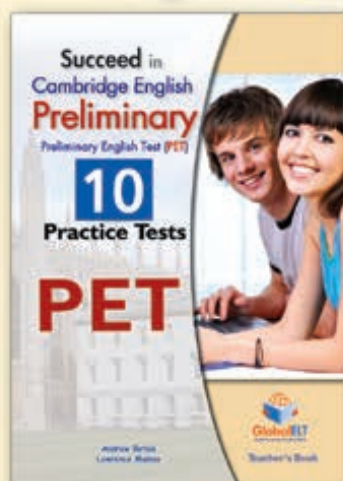
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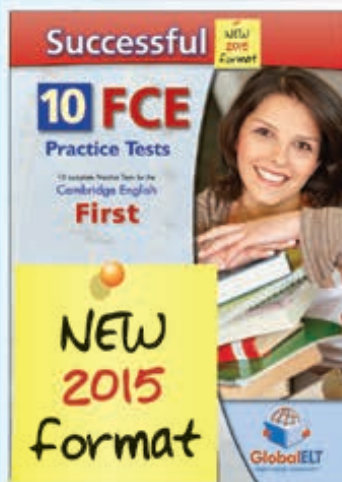
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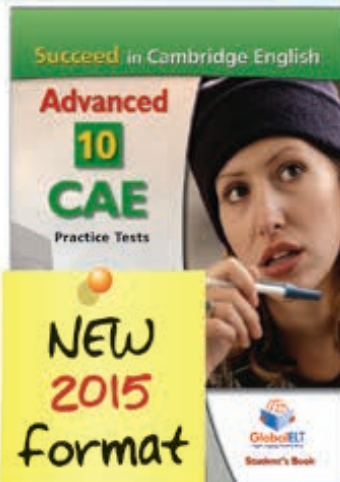
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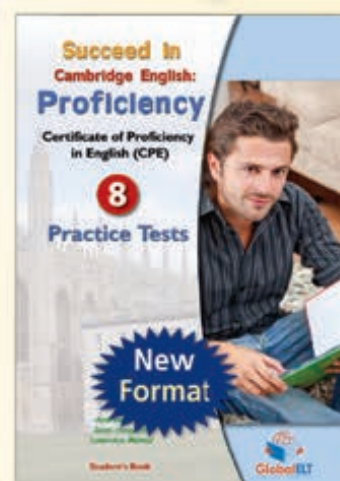
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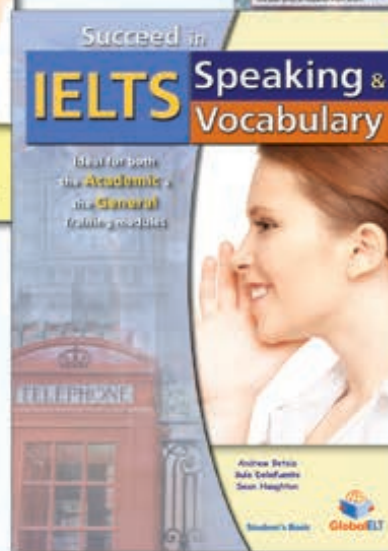
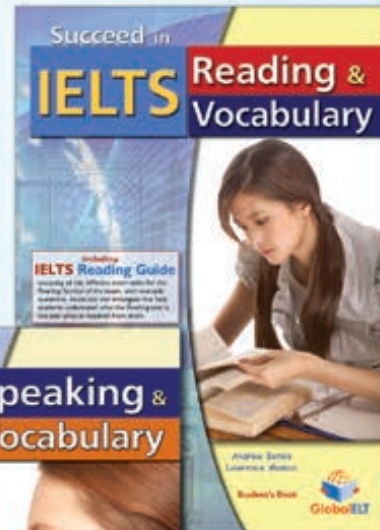
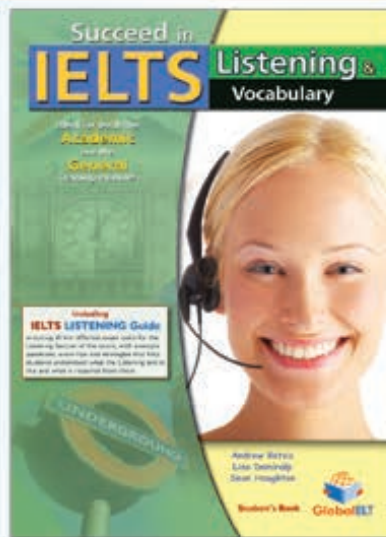
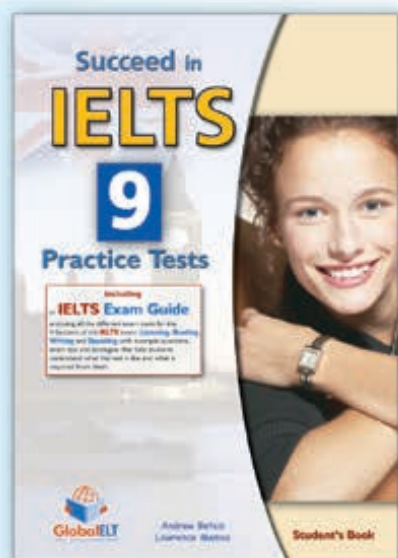
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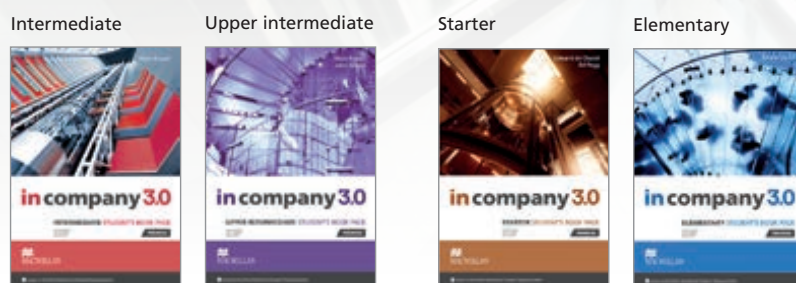
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